

A HISTORY
of
FIRST BAPTIST CHURCH
Gastonia, N. C.



"Shaping Lives and Sharing Love"

1876 - 1976

Mrs. Emory Derry



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A
HISTORY OF
FIRST BAPTIST CHURCH

By

R. L. Bolick

CENTENNIAL CELEBRATION

First Baptist Church • Gastonia, North Carolina • May, 1976



DR. A. DOUGLAS ALDRICH, PASTOR

FOREWARD

The Spanish born poet-philosopher, George Santayana, once said: "Those who do not remember the past are condemned to relive it." History is the human attempt to preserve the records, the values, and the meanings of the past and transmit these to coming generations for their instruction and guidance.

A particular history of a specific people seeks to unravel the meanings and goals that have bound these persons together in life's pilgrimage. The following pages record a history of the first one hundred years of the First Baptist Church of Gastonia, North Carolina. The history is divided into chapters that record the various chronological periods in the life of the church.

Originally, Miss Jensie Underwood had volunteered to write our church history. She was a member of our church who had been a teacher of history for many years in our local Frank L. Ashley High School. She had been living in Mars Hill, North Carolina, for several years since her retirement. In 1951 she had prepared a brief historical brochure of our church in commemoration of the seventy-fifth anniversary. Before Miss Underwood could get this project of the one hundred year history under way, she died unexpectedly in September of 1974.

Soon after Miss Underwood's death, another of our faithful members volunteered to research the available historical records and write our history. This member was Mr. R. L. Bolick who has served for many years in our church as a deacon and Sunday School teacher. We take this means of expressing the gratitude of the church family to Mr. Bolick for his faithful fulfillment of this task. We also acknowledge our indebtedness to Mr. Cad Moton who, before his death, provided innumerable historical records and items related to the past years of our church. And our deep appreciation for the dedicated work of the History Committee: Mrs. Furman Lewis, E. W. Brockman, Mrs. Oscar Vaughn, Mrs. W. M. Farris, Miss Betty Willis, Mrs. John Brumley and many other individuals in the church family who contributed many hours of their personal time in assisting Mr. Bolick and giving suggestions as to revisions of his writing.

We hope that both present and future generations will profit from these historical records that tell a part of the story of the people who called themselves members of First Baptist Church of Gastonia during that one hundred-year period from 1876 to 1976. May their story be an inspiration of faith and hope and love to all who follow after. The story will always be incomplete because the living Christ continues to lead his church on pilgrimage in every generation.

— A. Douglas Aldrich

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CHAPTER I

OUR CHURCH AND BAPTIST HISTORY — AN INTRODUCTION

In our effort to prepare a short history of First Baptist Church of Gastonia we begin by looking back briefly at the roots from which this church sprang. But in doing so we are trying not to look so far back that we lose sight of our immediate predecessors in the faith. Therefore we are focusing our attention upon the activities and accomplishments of our Baptist forefathers right here in America. We begin by taking a quick look at a few of the early arrivals of Baptist in this country.

We do not know who the first Baptist was to set foot on American soil. But we know from American history that many of these early immigrants came here to escape religious persecution in the old countries. Some of them were Baptists. Others became Baptists after coming to America. Among these early arrivals were such Baptist leaders as Roger Williams and John Clarke.

Roger Williams was born in Wales in 1598. He received his education at the Universities of Oxford and of Cambridge. He was a Puritan and a Separatist. He spoke out openly against religious intolerance and persecution. For this he himself became a victim of persecution. To escape such persecution he fled to America in 1630.

Mr. Williams arrived in Boston during the winter of 1630-31. He was warmly received, and was offered the pastorate of the established church of Boston. He declined the offer of this church because of its ties with the Anglican church. He then became a teacher or pastor in the church at Salem which had severed all its ties with the Anglican establishment. As he continued to speak out against religious intolerance and persecution, he found himself suffering the same kind of persecution from which he had fled when he came here.

After being banished from the Massachusetts colony, and after being hounded by the persecutors wherever he went in the other colonies, he, with a small band of associates, finally fled to the virgin territory that is now the state of Rhode Island. There he and his associates settled, established a new town called Providence, and organized the first Baptist church on the American continent. When this territory was made a British colony, Mr. Williams was appointed its first governor. He then proclaimed religious liberty for everyone in the colony and invited all the persecuted of the other colonies to join him in this haven of freedom.

Another of these early arrivals was John Clarke. Though he was an Englishman, Mr. Clarke was educated at Leyden University in Holland. He too was a Puritan and a Separatist. When he aired his views publicly, he also found himself a victim of persecution. He fled to America in 1637. He quickly learned that persecution had crossed the Atlantic ahead of him and was waiting for him in his new home. He, like many others, was finally forced to flee for refuge to the Rhode Island colony.

In Rhode Island Mr. Clarke was warmly received by Roger Williams, a kindred spirit. Under Clarke's leadership, another Baptist church was established in the colony at the town of Newport. From there he continued his

able leadership for many years, and traveled many miles in the interest of the Baptist cause. He became one of the most influential Baptist leaders of his day.

Although persecution was widespread and severe in New England, the Baptists of America were for many years concentrated in the New England area. In spite of persecution, they had managed to establish a number of Baptist churches in the New England colonies. The severity of persecution eventually forced some of them to leave their homes. A majority of them fled to the Rhode Island colony and they helped to establish additional Baptist churches there. As a result, Rhode Island became the first Baptist stronghold in America.

This big influx of new settlers in this small colony soon caused it to become somewhat overcrowded. Though they seemed reluctant to do so, a few of them eventually dared to move a little farther south. They settled in New Jersey and Pennsylvania, where they encountered little or no opposition and where they established several Baptist churches in both colonies.

Once this southward movement had begun, others followed quickly in that direction. A few of them ventured as far south as Virginia, where at first they attracted little attention. As they began to win new converts and establish new churches, persecution arose. It eventually got so bad that in one year alone no fewer than 83 Baptist preachers were arrested and tried. Forty-four of them were sentenced to prison. Persecution failed to halt their progress, however, and within a few years Virginia had become another Baptist stronghold.

For several years after this southward movement began, these Baptists went only as far away as they thought necessary in order to escape persecution. Some of them decided that if they had to move at all, they would go as far away as they could. Since they looked upon the interior as being a rather uninviting area, they decided to move down the coastal area toward the Deep South. Typical of this long distance migration was the little Baptist church in Kittery, Maine.

The little church at Kittery was led by an Englishman, William Screven. He had come to America in 1680 and settled in the town of Kittery. Soon after settling there, he was converted to the Baptist faith. A short time later he made his way to the Baptist church at Boston. There, on June 21, 1681, he was baptized and licensed to preach. He then returned to the church at Kittery where he immediately incurred the wrath of the persecutors.

The persecution in this colony became so restrictive and severe that Mr. Screven and his people were forbidden under threat of imprisonment to hold services anywhere in the colony of Maine. Therefore, since their zeal for the faith would not let them remain silent, these Baptists had to make a decision. They could stay where they were and face the ominous threat of imprisonment, or they could flee to some far away place out of reach of their persecutors. They chose the latter course of action, sold their possessions, and prepared to move southward in a body.

These refugees had set for themselves a long, hard journey, for they had decided to head for the Deep South. The trek through the wilderness was fraught with many hardships and privations. But after overcoming many difficulties in the way, they finally arrived in the vicinity of Charleston, South

Carolina. There they settled down, built new homes, and established the first Baptist church in the Deep South. The exact date of this is not certain. Most historians place their estimates of the time somewhere within the period between 1683 and 1691.

With this church as their base of operations, these transplanted Baptists began to proclaim their witness boldly and unceasingly. As a result, the Baptist movement spread rapidly to all parts of the colony and even beyond its borders, and South Carolina became another Baptist stronghold.

From the foregoing information we see that by the end of the seventeenth century, and in spite of persecution, Baptists had managed to establish three strongholds of faith in America: namely Rhode Island, Virginia, and South Carolina. Many other areas were still untouched by the Baptist witness. One of these was our own state of North Carolina. Since North Carolina was situated between the two Baptist strongholds of Virginia and South Carolina, it was inevitable that the Baptist witness would reach into this state too. It did so in the early seventeen hundreds.

Not all historians are agreed as to who brought the Baptist witness into North Carolina. There may have been a number of cases of such witness that were left unrecorded. Dr. Pope A. Duncan credits Paul Palmer with establishing the first Baptist church in the state in the Chowan precinct about the year 1727. That church failed to survive. Another Baptist church organized by Mr. Palmer in Camden county in 1729 still stands as the oldest Baptist church in North Carolina. This was the Shiloh Baptist Church.

A few years later a number of Baptist families moved into the Piedmont area of our state and organized several Baptist churches in Mecklenburg, Union and Cabarrus counties. About 1750 a few Baptists from there along with others from South Carolina moved into the Union Road section of Gaston county. About the same time a number of Presbyterians moved into the same community. Neither of them had a church or a church house.

Living in that same community was a land owner, Jacob Rhodes. Mr. Rhodes donated a nice building site to be used for religious purposes by all Protestants. A building was then erected on this property. Since it was to be shared jointly by both Baptists and Presbyterians, they called it the Union Church Building. About the year 1763 a Baptist church was organized there, and because its services were held in the Union Church Building it was called the Union Baptist Church.

At about that same time another Baptist church was in the process of being formed in the Long Creek community near Dallas. For several years the Baptists of that community held open air services at a place called "The Rock". In the year 1772 they built an "All Weather Meeting House". That seems to have been the beginning of Long Creek Baptist Church as an organized body.

These two, the Union and the Long Creek churches, were the first two Baptist churches in Gaston County. There is difference of opinion among historians as to which of them is the older. The differences of opinion hinge on two questions. Is the Sandy Plains Baptist Church merely a continuation of the Union Baptist Church under a different name or did members of the Union Baptist Church join with other Baptists in organizing a new church at Sandy

Plains?

Some local historians, including the present pastor of the Sandy Plains Church, lean toward the latter interpretation and date the beginning of their church in 1863. Others, including at least one former pastor, lean toward the earlier interpretation and date the beginning of their church with that of the Union Baptist Church in 1763. We cannot say which of these claims is correct. Certain other facts about these two churches are not in question. The Union Church was the first Baptist church to be organized in Gaston county, but the Long Creek Church is the oldest Baptist church in the county in terms of its continued existence at one place under one name.

Soon after the organization of these two churches, other Baptist churches began springing up in many parts of Gaston county. It was to be at least another hundred years before there would be a Baptist church in the area that is now the city of Gastonia. The reason is obvious. There was no Gastonia at that time. This area was largely an uninhabited wilderness. Great changes were destined to take place here during the next hundred years. We turn now to the story of those changes and to the story of First Baptist Church of Gastonia.

CHAPTER II

THE PERIOD OF SPIRITUAL CONCEPTION, 1874-1875

For members and friends of First Baptist Church of Gastonia the year 1976 has great historical significance. It is the centennial year in the history of this church. In observance of this centennial we think it is fitting that we recall the major events in the history of the church and pay tribute to the many faithful men and women who were instrumental in the making of that history.

We think it is also fitting that we remember Paul's picture of the church as the living body of Christ. Since it is a living body, we may also think of it as having passed through the same stages of conception, birth, growth, and development as does any other living body. Therefore, we shall look at this church as it appeared in each of these stages, beginning with its period of spiritual conception.

Finally, we think it is important that we take note of the environmental conditions prevailing here when this church had its beginning. For the religious outlook of any people is determined to some extent by the environmental conditions in which they live. What then were these conditions immediately before and at that time?

As stated at the close of the preceding chapter this area was largely an unsettled wilderness. Since the end of the Civil War it was undergoing rapid changes. Cotton farmers were moving in and clearing away the forests to make more and larger cotton fields. Soon after the war, a new railroad had been completed between Charlotte and Atlanta. It passed through this community, and cotton merchants and other business men were beginning to move into the area. Among them were a number of Baptist families. Still there was no town or city here, but only a small village.

At that time, the mid eighteen seventies, Gastonia was little more than a whistle stop on the main line of the Southern Railway. The village consisted of half a dozen buildings, including a general store, a liquor store, a blacksmith shop, a small Methodist church, an old one room house, and a new two story house. These were grouped in a small area near the depot, and they in turn were surrounded by large open fields which dominated the landscape of this entire area.

Most of the people lived and eked out their meager livelihood on these farms. They were trying to recover from the ravages of the Civil War which was scarcely more than a decade behind them. The loss of that war by the people of the South had rendered their Confederate money worthless. Very little Federal money was trickling down into the South at that time. They were just now in the first stages of post war recovery, and economic conditions were at a very low level.

In the midst of these hardships and privations came the carpetbaggers from the North. By skillful manipulation of the votes of the large Negro population, they managed to gain control of most state and local units of government. They were not interested in helping the people of the South, but only in what they could gain for themselves through political power. The people lost confidence in their state and local governments, and they were in

no position at that time to expect help from the Federal Government.

Under these conditions the people had no place to turn for help but to their own ingenuity. They learned to produce or improvise for themselves the bare necessities of life. They produced their own food on their farms. They even learned to make their own clothes by carding, spinning, and weaving some of their cotton into the cloth for making their garments. Under these conditions they naturally became self-reliant and somewhat cynical and distrustful of other people.

With these attitudes and conditions prevailing, Gastonia seemed a most unlikely place for the establishment of a Baptist church. Yet it was under these conditions when the idea of a Baptist church in this community was first conceived in the hearts of a few Baptist men and women. Once the idea had been conceived, it began to grow and develop and to show signs of life and movement.

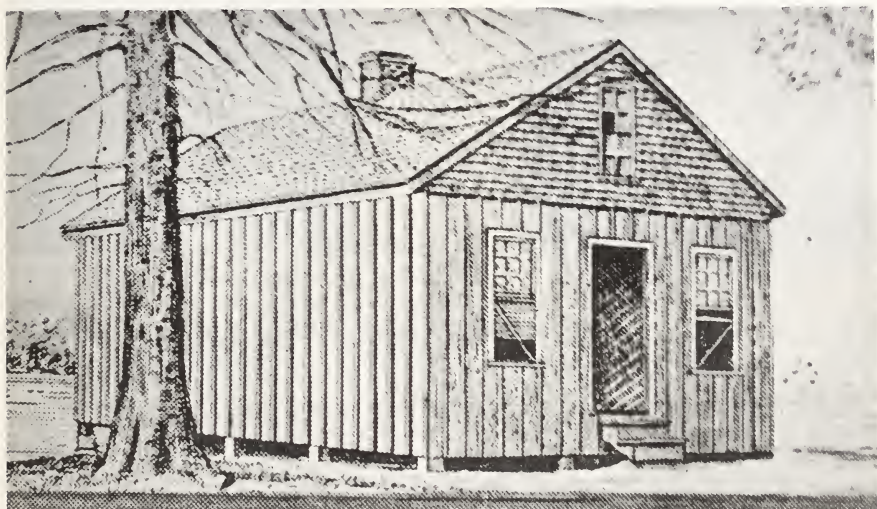
The first significant movement of this embryonic body was the move to establish some sort of Baptist center for the worship of God and for the study of the Bible. In the throes of political and economic bondage, they seemed



Model of Railroad Station Where the Sunday School Met in 1875.

ready to turn to the Lord for help. They began making plans for the establishment of such a center. They decided to begin with the organization of a Baptist Sunday School with the hope that there would eventually emerge a Baptist church.

With this aim in view they began to look for a place where such a Sunday School could meet. The only place they could find at the time was the old one room house that had formerly been used by some black women to operate a "Public Eating House". It was now vacant and available. After securing this old house for a meeting place, they set out to canvass the entire community and invite all Baptists and friends to an organization meeting to be held on a Sunday afternoon in May, 1875.

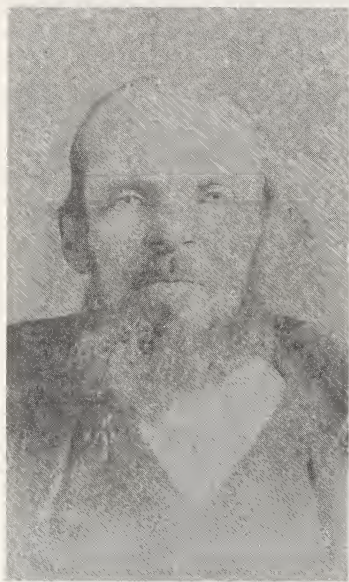


One Room Store Building Used in 1875-1885.

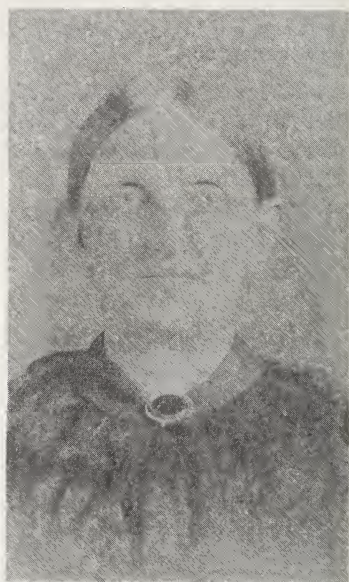
The meeting was held as planned, and the response was good. On that day, the first Baptist Sunday School in Gastonia's history was organized and established. Rev. Sylvanus Head, who had recently moved here from South Carolina, was elected Superintendent, and Mr. J. E. Page, the depot agent, was elected Secretary and Treasurer. Mr. T. G. Chalk was elected Assistant Superintendent. So the new Sunday School was off to a promising start.

From the very beginning, the Sunday School grew steadily both in interest and in attendance. As a result, within a few months it had outgrown its small quarters and it became necessary to look for a larger place to meet. When they had been unable to find a more suitable place, Mr. Page, the depot agent, gave the Sunday School permission to meet in a large room of the railway station. This room was adequate for taking care of the crowds; and it was centrally located, but it had one disadvantage. The Sunday School sessions were often interrupted by the loud noises of passing freight trains and shifting engines. Again they had to look for a new and quieter place.

This time they found and secured an empty store building about a third of



Rev. Sylvanus Head



Mrs. Rebecca Head

a mile west of the depot. It was about twenty by forty feet in size. This was the best place they had yet found, and they moved into it immediately.

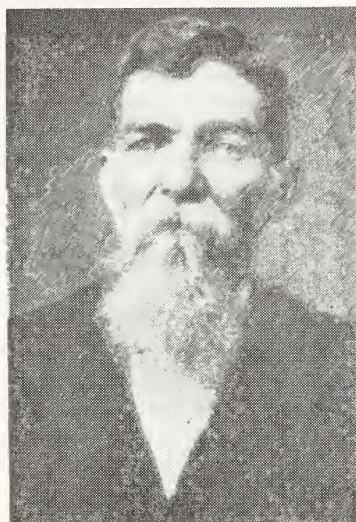
The Sunday School was now almost a year old, and the enrollment had grown to more than a hundred. This so encouraged the leaders that they decided the time had come to organize a Baptist church. In this they believed their original plans were about to be realized, and they began to make ready for it.

The idea of a Baptist church in this community had not only been conceived; it had also grown and developed to the point where this embryonic body was struggling to break forth into the world as a new body in Christ in the form of a Baptist church. Could this young and tender body survive the pangs of birth and the disease ridden atmosphere of such an environment? It will be interesting to follow its story and see what happens to it, especially in the near future.

CHAPTER III

THE PERIOD OF BIRTH AND TRAVAIL, 1876-1883

At the end of the last chapter we left this embryonic body struggling to break forth into the world as a living body in the form of a new Baptist church. That the time had come for this event was evidenced in the activities of these Sunday School leaders in making preparations for it. They settled upon the proper time, May 1876. They placed a notice in *The Gaston Times*; and they canvassed the entire community to invite all Baptist to be present. They called in a Presbytery of three ministers from the Kings Mountain Association: Rev. P. R. Elam, Rev. A. L. Durham, and Rev. D. W. Thomason, to preside over and supervise the organization proceedings.



Rev. P. R. Elam

The meeting was held as planned; it lasted three days. During this time the organization was perfected with these twenty-nine charter members: Jonas Jenkins, Sarah Jenkins, E. C. McAllister, Martha McAllister, Gaston Littlejohn, J. W. Smith, Sarah Lay, Mrs. Alfred Lay, Isabella Smith, C. C. Smith, P. C. Gladden, Rev. Sylvanus Head, Rebecca Head, J. R. Johnston, T. G. Chalk, Lizzie Chalk, S. F. Chalk, S. A. Smyre, C. H. Lay, S. F. Lay, Eliza Lay, Jemima Fayssoux, R. L. Johnson, Eliza Johnson, Martha M. Glenn, Martha Capps, J. A. Mason, M. R. Chalk, S. L. Smith.

Officers elected were: Deacons, T. G. Chalk, J. W. Smith, and R. L. Johnson; Church Clerk, T. G. Chalk. The church then called Rev. P. R. Elam, one of the presbyters, as its first pastor. He served about three years, and was succeeded by Rev. A. F. Pugh, who served about one year. Rev. P. R. Elam was then called back for one more year, thus completing the first five year period in the life of this young church. That five year period was one of steady growth, and of peace, harmony, and co-operation. So the church seemed headed for a bright and glorious future. But unsuspected troubles lay just ahead that would tear this young church apart and almost destroy it. It would soon be hit by two crippling crises in quick succession.

After Mr. Elam resigned the second time, the church called Rev. J. H. Booth as its next pastor. The first of these two crises came during his ministry here. He was an ardent prohibitionist and a strong advocate of total abstinence from all alcoholic beverages. So forceful were his preaching and teaching that the church was led to pass a resolution forbidding its members to manufacture, buy, sell, or use alcoholic beverages, or to sell their grain and produce to the distillers for making these beverages.

This resolution was passed by a majority vote. But there was a strong opposition vote. When these opponents were defeated, they promptly left the

church and withdrew their financial support. Since it was still a comparatively small church, the remaining members had a hard time paying the expenses to keep the work of the church going, but with strong determination and extra sacrifices of the members it managed to survive this setback. In a few months it seemed to be well on the way to full recovery.

Shortly before the second of these crises came upon this young church, Rev. J. H. Booth had resigned. The church had called Rev. D. W. Thomason to succeed him. It was during his pastorate that this second crisis occurred, although he had nothing to do with bringing it on. It was actually precipitated by the other churches in town. Of course, they intended no hurt to the Baptists in what they did. But the results were no less devastating. It came about this way.

The Methodist and Presbyterian Sunday Schools were small, and they had a hard time keeping up attendance. In an effort to increase attendance and interest in Sunday School, they conceived the idea of organizing one big Union Sunday School for all the churches in town. They thought such a Sunday School, supported by all the churches in town would be more interesting and attractive. They invited the Baptists to join them in this new venture, and even offered to make the Baptist Superintendent head of the Union School. The Baptists asked for a little time to consider the matter and promised to let them know in a few days.

When the Baptists met to consider this proposal, there was long and somewhat heated discussion. There were many implications in such a move that had to be considered. There was the question of whose literature would be used. There were doctrinal differences to be considered. There was the problem of getting the people back to their own churches for worship services. There was the possibility that the Union School would not last long. Due to these and other considerations, the majority of the Baptists voted against the proposal in favor of keeping their own Sunday School. They notified the other churches of their decision, but promised them that if they would hold the Union School at a different hour from that of the Baptists, they would give it all the support they could short of giving up their own Sunday School.

This decision was made by a majority vote. Again there was a sizable opposition vote. When these opponents were defeated, they too left the church and joined the Union School. Most of them never again came back to the Baptist church. If we call that first crisis a crippling blow, we must label this one a knock-out blow. So few members were now left in this young church that they could not pay the expenses and keep it going. All services of both Sunday School and church were suspended indefinitely, and remained so for many months. To all outward appearances, the church seemed to be dead; many people so pronounced it. When pastor Thomason saw no hope of bringing these Baptists back together, he finally gave up the struggle and moved away, so the church lay prostrate, stunned, and silent.

As had been feared by some of the Baptist leaders, The Union Sunday School failed to produce the hoped for results. After a few months it collapsed. The Methodists and Presbyterians turned to their own churches and reorganized their own Sunday Schools; but the Baptists continued to be inactive and silent. The few faithful ones now left were faced with some

soul-searching questions: should they accept the conclusion of the general public that the Baptist cause in Gastonia was dead? Should they continue to hope for and expect eventual revival and renewal? They still believed this church was the work of the Lord, and that he would not let it die. They continued to hope and pray for the Lord's intervention in their behalf.

As we now look back upon these tragic events we may well wonder how and why such things happen to a seemingly consecrated and devoted body of Christians. We may be inclined toward harsh judgment of those who deserted this church in times of its greatest need, but we must remember that they lived in a culture and environment that was vastly different from ours of today. Their cynical and selfish attitudes were at least in part the product of this culture and environment. Of course, they were wrong in their attitudes and actions, but who knows what we ourselves might do under similar circumstances? This does not excuse these wrong attitudes and actions, but it does partly explain the reasons for them.

The faithful ones now left in this church tried repeatedly to bring about revival and renewal of this stricken body. For many months all their efforts seemed to be of no avail. Finally, they decided that their only hope of revival was in the securing of new leadership, a leader who had not been connected in any way with the controversial issues that had torn this body apart. They began to pray for such a leader.

As they prayed and hoped for this new leadership, they still wondered what had happened to them and why it had happened. Though they could not understand it all, they still believed that the Lord had a purpose in it all, and that he would somehow bring a blessing out of it. In this belief, they continued to pray and wait upon the Lord.

CHAPTER IV

THE PERIOD OF RECOVERY AND RENEWAL, 1884-1890

At the close of the preceding chapter we left this little church lying prostrate, stunned and silent. The few faithful ones continued to pray for the Lord's help in this struggle. Among these faithful ones was Mr. T. G. Chalk who had been one of the most loyal and active workers from the very beginning. He joined the others in praying for help. It was to him that the answer to their prayers was first revealed. This revelation came to him in a strange and unexpected way.

One bright sunny day as Mr. Chalk was on his way to work, he met a Presbyterian friend and stopped for a short chat. In their conversation the subject of the Baptists in Gastonia came up; his friend quickly voiced the general opinion of the people. "Tom", he said, "The Baptists of Gastonia are dead. They don't have a Sunday School and could not if they wanted to. They are laid on the shelf for good". Well, this was not the first time Mr. Chalk had heard such words, but the tone of finality in his friend's voice shocked him to the core. For a moment he was speechless. Then he recovered enough to answer weakly, "Yes, it does seem so", but as he went on his way, he could not put these words out of his mind. The words, "The Baptists are dead", kept ringing in his ears.

When Mr. Chalk reached his place of business, these words so haunted his thoughts that he could not concentrate on his work. Could these words possibly be true? He could not believe it. Yet all their efforts up to this time had been in vain, and the Lord had not yet answered their prayers. Then a strange and unexpected thing happened. It was like a heavenly vision. He suddenly remembered a new friend in town, Mr. James D. Moore, who had recently moved here from Dallas to operate a store. He was a Baptist, and he had not been connected in any way with the controversial issues that had torn and divided this church. Could he be the answer to their prayers? Had the Lord already sent them a new leader and they had not recognized him? Well, since he could not keep his mind on his work anyhow, there was only one thing for him to do. He would walk the short distance across the railroad to Mr. Moore's store and find out if this vision were real or only a figment of his own imagination.

When Mr. Chalk entered the store, Mr. Moore greeted him with his usual friendly smile. After a few words of greeting, Mr. Chalk launched into an explanation of the purpose of his visit. He rehearsed to Mr. Moore the complete history of the Sunday School and the church. He then described the controversies that had torn them apart. He told Mr. Moore of their prayers for a new leadership. Finally, he explained how on that very morning he had envisioned him, Mr. Moore, as that new leader sent by the Lord for this very purpose. It was a powerful and impassioned plea for help. When he finished, Mr. Chalk breathed another silent prayer and waited for Mr. Moore's response.

Mr. Moore remained silent for some time and seemed to be in deep thought. When he finally replied, he spoke as if the matter had already been settled. "Tom", he asked, "How many of your friends can we count on to help

us in such an undertaking?" Mr. Chalk hastened to assure him that he knew more than a dozen people who could be counted on to do all they could. Mr. Moore then suggested that Mr. Chalk call these friends to meet with them and work out their plans.

Mr. Chalk had entered the store that morning with a heavy heart, and with lingering doubts as to the reality of his vision. Now he left in high spirits, truly expecting good things to happen to their little church in the near future. He got busy at once calling his friends to tell them the good news and to urge them to meet with him and Mr. Moore to make their plans for this new effort.

When they came together for this planning session, they were faced with a number of problems. First of all, they had to find a new place for their meetings. During this long silent period they had lost their former "meeting house". They solved this problem by securing the use of the Old Abel Building in the center of town.

The next problem was that of finding and inviting all the Baptists of the community to a reorganization meeting. In their effort to do this they placed a notice in the Gastonia Gazette and made a house to house canvass to make sure that all Baptists were notified and invited to this meeting.

They agreed on July 27, 1884, as the date for this meeting. The attendance was good, even better than some of them had expected. It was the largest gathering of Gastonia Baptists in several years. They decided that the first step in reorganization should be the revival of the Sunday School. This was done, and T. G. Chalk was elected the new Superintendent. James D. Moore was elected Assistant Superintendent. Dr. W. H. Hoffman was elected Secretary-Treasurer. Mrs. R. T. Harper was elected Sunday School Organist. The organization was completed and the Sunday School was off to a new start. It grew rapidly; before long the Baptists had the largest Sunday School in town. They were not dead as most people had supposed. They were only stunned into silence for a long time, but now they were again wide awake and active.

As the Sunday School continued to grow in interest and attendance, it began to take on some of the aspects of a Baptist church. There were occasional worship services when a visiting minister was available to preach for them. After a whole year had passed, they still had no regular pastor, and the church itself was not yet reorganized. But the almost phenomenal success of the Sunday School encouraged the leaders to undertake that step too. After much discussion, planning, and prayer, they announced a meeting for September 27, 1885, to carry out this final step. Again the attendance was good; and they proceeded immediately with that final step.

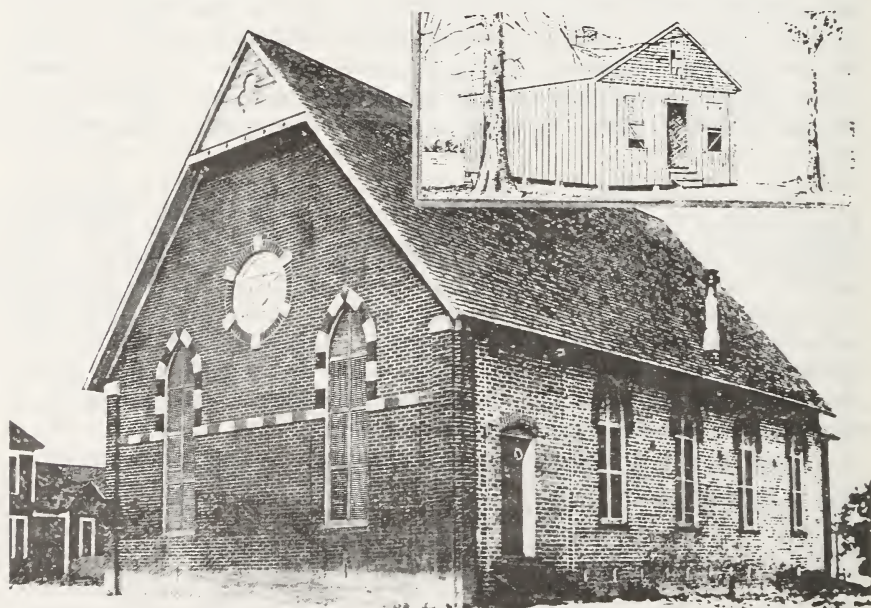
Again, they found themselves facing difficult problems. One of them was that of locating all the former members. No one seemed to know where many of them were, nor who should be counted as members now. A few of them had died. Others had moved away. Several had joined other churches, and a number of them had simply dropped out of sight so that their whereabouts were unknown. How could they ever revise the membership roll and bring it up to date? Or should they begin an entirely new enrollment?

After wrestling with this problem for some time, they finally reached a

sort of compromise agreement. They would begin a new enrollment with this provision: All the former members who wished to do so would have their names entered first on the new roll. Then those who wished to come by letter from other churches would have their names added. This would satisfy those who insisted that the church had not been dead, but only stunned and silent for these many months. It would provide continuity and be a reorganized church rather than a new church.

In carrying out this decision the following nineteen former members were enrolled: Jonas Jenkins, Sarah Jenkins, E. C. McAllister, Martha McAllister, Mary A. Capps, Martha Capps, Eliza Johnson, Rev. Sylvanus Head, Rebecca Head, Mrs. R. L. Garrison, Mrs. Mary A. White, Mrs. C. C. Smith, Mrs. M. N. Glenn, Mrs. Mary N. Kenley, James W. Robinson, J. W. Smith, V. L. Smith, S. L. Smith, Isabella Smith. These eight new members coming by letter were then added: Mrs. T. E. Harper, Mrs. M. E. Robinson, Hampton Padgett, Mrs. Mary T. Padgett, James D. Moore, Sr., Martha J. Moore, H. H. Moore, Mrs. M. J. Stewart. Finally these four coming under the watch-care of the church pending receipt of their letters were added: Dr. W. H. Hoffman, I. E. Stanley, Miss Rolland E. Stanley, Miss Hannie E. Stanley.

The reorganized church began with thirty-one members enrolled, which was only two more than the original charter membership in 1876, but all of these were tried and true Baptists who had remained loyal to their churches through all crises and trials. They were now bound together in a united fellowship that would never again be torn apart by petty quarrels and disagreements.



Church, Corner of Marietta Street and Long Avenue 1885-1900.

That this church had at last recovered from its near fatal wounds and was now strong and healthy again was evidenced by its further action at that same reorganization meeting. After calling Rev. J. A. White as its new pastor, the members immediately began to plan for the building of their own house of worship. Rev. and Mrs. Sylvanus Head donated a fine building lot at the corner of Marietta Street and Long Avenue. Others gave money and materials, and the work of building got under way immediately.

The new building was completed in a period of about two months. It was a simple rectangular structure without tower, steeple, or baptismal facilities, but it was adequate for their needs at the time. There was plenty of room for later expansion. Best of all, it was not a commercial building converted to church use, but rather a new building erected and dedicated to the service of



Remodeled Church, Corner of Marietta Street and Long Avenue 1900-1923.

God. It belonged to the Baptists of Gastonia.

Now this little church had been completely reorganized and had entered upon a new era of growth and development. From that day forward, it has never ceased to worship God on a regular basis and to bear its Christian witness to this community and to the world. From that humble beginning, it has grown to be a real tower of strength in community and world missions.

Rev. J. A. White remained and served this church faithfully for about five years. He nursed it through the remainder of this recovery and renewal period until full recovery had been attained. He then resigned, and the church called Rev. F. C. Hixon to lead it through the first years of its growth and maturity period.

CHAPTER V

THE PERIOD OF GROWTH AND MATURITY, 1891-1911

Having apparently recovered from the near fatal blows it had suffered, this church now entered upon a long period of growth toward full maturity. Rev. F. C. Hixon, pastor at the time, remained until the end of the year 1892. During that time the church advanced from a part time to a full time pastorate. It also made significant advances in other areas such as Christian education, doctrinal soundness, and church discipline. Mr. Hixon insisted that every Christian ought to know the doctrines of his faith and ought to live up to the demands of Christian discipleship. He contended that the church ought to maintain a watchful care over its members in helping them to so live.

To assist the members in achieving such a life, Mr. Hixon asked the church to provide some form of guidance such as a church covenant that would set forth the rules of behavior for the Christian life based on the teachings and commands of our Lord. He asked the church to elect a committee to work with him in preparing such a covenant. In response to this request the church elected J. D. Brumfield, S. T. Hancock, W. F. Marshall, L. L. Jenkins, and James D. Moore to this committee.

After a careful study of several versions of such covenants in use in other Baptist churches, the committee recommended one of the older versions found in many churches all over the country. They brought this recommendation to the church in July, 1891. On the ninth day of that month the church adopted it by unanimous vote. Today, eighty-five years later, it still stands as the official covenant of this church. For the information of the reader we are giving here a copy of that covenant.

FIRST BAPTIST CHURCH COVENANT

Having been, as we trust, brought by divine grace to embrace the Lord Jesus Christ, and to give ourselves wholly to him, we do now solemnly and joyfully covenant with each other, to walk together in him, to his glory, as our common Lord. We do, therefore, in his strength, engage:

That we will exercise a Christian care and watchfulness over each other, and faithfully warn, exhort, and admonish each other, as occasion may require;

That we will not forsake the assembling of ourselves together, but will uphold the public worship of God, and the ordinances of his house;

That we will not neglect closet and family religion at home, nor neglect the great duty of religiously training our children, and those under our care, for the service of Christ, and the enjoyment of heaven;

That, as we are the light of the world, and the salt of the earth, we will seek divine aid, to enable us to deny ungodliness, and every worldly lust, and to walk circumspectly in the world, that we may win the souls of men;

That we will cheerfully contribute of our property, according as God has prospered us, for the maintenance of a faithful and evangelical ministry among us, for the support of the poor, and to spread the gospel over the earth;

That we will, in all conditions, even till death, strive to live to the glory of him, who has called us out of darkness into his marvelous light.

"And may the God of peace, who brought again from the dead our Lord Jesus, that great shepherd of the sheep, through the blood of the everlasting

covenant, make us perfect in every good work, to do his will, through Jesus Christ; to whom be glory for ever and ever" (Hebrews 13:20-21). (End of Covenant)

As everyone can see, this covenant is a series of solemn promises of obedience to our Lord. The promises are so plainly stated that all can understand them. This was the underlying reason why the pastor and his committee selected and recommended this particular version. They wanted something that was easy to understand, for every member of the church was expected to live up to these promises to the best of his ability. Everyone who carelessly or deliberately failed to do so would be subject to the disciplinary action of the church. The proof that the church tried to carry out this ministry faithfully is found in the number of exclusions from its fellowship during all of this growth and maturity period.

The adoption of this covenant and the practice of church discipline were only a small part of the activities of this church during the Hixon ministry. It was also marked by other noteworthy events. For example, in the same year 1891, some of the members living in East Gastonia called for the organization of a Baptist church in their part of town. In response to this demand, this church granted letters of transfer to thirty-eight of those members to help in the organization of a new church there which became the East Baptist Church.

This seems to have been the first time our church gave up some of its members to help establish another Baptist church, but it was by no means the last time. In 1905, the same thing happened in West Gastonia where Loray Baptist Church was established. Then in 1910 a mission was established in South Gastonia which in 1917 became the South Marietta Street Baptist Church. Thus, our church has continued its missionary enterprise of sponsoring and supporting new Baptist churches. The latest such effort by this church was the Southside Mission on York Road, which just this year became Southside Baptist Church.

After about three years of faithful and fruitful service here, Rev. F. C. Hixon resigned, effective at the end of the year 1892. . . On the following April 9, 1893, the church extended a call to Rev. E. F. Jones of Zionville in Watauga County. Mr. Jones agreed to come provided his work here begin on September 1. The church approved this provision, and then called Rev. R. W. Sanders of Florence, S. C. to serve as interim pastor until that time.

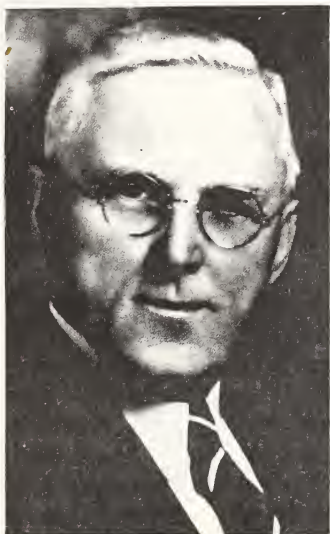
During this interim period our church decided to change its affiliation from the Kings Mountain Association to the South Fork Association. It asked for and received from the Kings Mountain Association a letter of transfer in August, 1893. At its September meeting it was formally received into the South Fork Association, where it remained until the formation of the Gaston Association.

As he had agreed, Rev. E. F. Jones came to his work here on September 1, 1893. During his ministry the church continued its steady growth with a net increase of 38 members. This continuing growth created a new problem. The small building erected in 1885 was no longer adequate for taking care of the increased attendance. A building enlargement program became a pressing necessity for meeting this need. The leaders of the church began making plans

for this new effort.

In the forefront of this planning was Mr. James D. Moore, who had long been an active leader and worker in both the Sunday School and the church. Before these plans could be completed, however, Mr. Moore's untimely death brought a halt to the planning. He had been a most dependable and most liberal contributor to the finances of the church, and some members thought that without his help they were unable to proceed. After a reasonable period of mourning their loss, they realized that the work of the church must go on, and they resumed their planning.

About the time the planning got under way again, Rev. E. F. Jones resigned; and the planning was again halted while the church looked for a new pastor. In the early summer of 1896 the church called Rev. C. H. Durham a recent graduate of the Southern Baptist Theological Seminary of Louisville, Kentucky. He came to the work in July of that year. During his two and a half year ministry the church had an unusually rapid growth in membership with a net increase of 72 members. This made the enlargement program even more urgent, and the planning continued at an increased pace, especially in the accumulation of sufficient building funds to justify the beginning of construction.



Rev. C. H. Durham

By the time they had made their financial arrangements and were about ready to let the contract for construction, Rev. C. H. Durham resigned. The plans again were temporarily sidetracked. Mr. Durham left at the end of the year 1898, but he did not leave alone. During his stay here he had married Miss Essie Modena Moore, the very accomplished daughter of the late James D. Moore. When he left, one of the members made this facetious remark, "Mr. Durham was well paid for his services here; for when he left, he took with him one of the church's best workers".

Soon after the resignation of Rev. C. H. Durham, the church called Dr. W. F. Watson as its new pastor. It was during his ministry that the building enlargement program was actually carried out. When the work was finished, these additions had been made: Balconies had been built the full length of the sanctuary on both sides. A new wing and two Sunday School rooms had been added. A tower and steeple had been erected. A baptistry had been installed back of the pulpit. Thus the seating capacity had been increased to more than double that of the old building, and the total cost was about \$7,000.00, which in those days was quite a large sum of money. After many years of planning, the rebuilding and enlargement program was completed in the year 1900, and the church settled down to another period of growth and expansion.

After nearly four years of faithful and fruitful ministry here, Dr. Watson resigned, and the church called Rev. W. H. Reddish to succeed him, in 1903. Mr. Reddish served this church for about eight years until 1911, which was the end of this growth and maturity period.

One of the outstanding events occurring during the Reddish ministry was the building of the church's first parsonage. This came about through the generosity of Mrs. Martha J. Moore. In the year 1907 she expressed a desire to erect a memorial to her late husband, James D. Moore. She offered to make it in the form of a home for the pastor provided the church would furnish a suitable building site for it. The church accepted the challenge and purchased two adjoining lots on the corner of Franklin Avenue and South Street. The combined lots had a frontage of about 174 feet on Franklin Avenue and 225 feet depth on South Street. The total cost of the lots was about \$7,000.00.



James D. Moore



Martha L. Moore

As she had proposed, Mrs. Moore then built a nice two story house on the northwest corner of this lot. The cost was about \$6,000.00. It was placed there in order to leave room for a new church building if and when it should be needed. This proved to be a wise decision, for in less than twenty years that need arose; and the lot was used for that purpose.

By the end of the Reddish ministry here, this church had apparently attained its full stature as a mature and stable body. There were many evidences of such maturity. Perhaps the best measure of such maturity is found in the ability of the church to attract and hold wise and able pastoral leaders for long periods of time. The records of this church and its pastors will make an interesting study of this standard of measurement. During the first fourteen years in the life of this church, it had nine different pastors for an average tenure of slightly over eighteen months each. During the next twenty-one years it had five pastors; and the average tenure had increased to

a little more than four years each. The last of these five had served for eight years, thus showing that steady growth toward full maturity.

The clinching evidence, however, is found in the record of the last sixty-five years. During this time the church has had only four pastors for an average tenure of more than sixteen years each. The last of these four is still serving this church and thus adding to this average. Surely this tells us something about the state of maturity this church had attained at the end of its growth and maturity period.

The last sixty-five years of the history of this church may well be divided into four separate periods. Each period will correspond to the number of years each of its last four pastors served this church. The first of these four periods is called The Period of the Barrett Ministry, which began on November 1, 1911 and ended December 31, 1927.

Each of these four periods in that sixty-five year history was fraught with its own peculiar problems and needs. As we continue the story of the church through these periods, we shall see how each pastor and his people met and resolved those peculiar problems and needs.

CHAPTER VI

THE PERIOD OF THE BARRETT MINISTRY, 1911-1927

We have now followed the story of First Baptist Church through the first thirty-five years of its history, covering all the periods, from the time of its conception to its full maturity. Now we are ready to follow it through the next sixty-five years to see how it performed through all these years as a mature body.

The first division of this long span of years is called The Period of the Barrett Ministry. This was marked by great changes and by new problems. The hardships and privations of the post war period had largely faded into the past. A new generation had grown up. The North and the South were again united. A new economic era had begun, especially here in the South. Gastonia was in the midst of that new growth.



Rev. W. C. Barrett

The new economic upsurge in the Gastonia area was due largely to the textile industry and its ever increasing movement from the New England states to the South. Gastonia and Gaston County were favorite spots for the relocation of this industry. Its mild climate, its abundant supplies of raw cotton near at hand, and its untapped labor force were key factors in attracting the industry to this area. The coming of this industry brought a new prosperity to this community the like of which it had never known before.

The coming of this industry brought many changes and created many new problems. The new payrolls attracted many other businesses such as cotton merchants, food and clothing and furniture stores, machine shops, and textile supply shops. It also increased the demand for food and other farm products. In fact, it raised the economic standards of the entire area. Of course, with all this came hundreds and hundreds of new residents, many of them Baptists. Naturally this made new demands on the churches. Our church called a new pastor to lead in meeting these needs. But what kind of man was this pastor? What were his qualifications?

This new pastor, William Charles Barrett, was born and reared in Moore County, North Carolina. He was educated in the Moore County Schools, Wake Forest College, and Southern Baptist Theological Seminary of Louisville, Kentucky. His first pastorate after graduation from the seminary was at Durham, North Carolina. From there he came to the Gastonia church on November 1, 1911. He served here for sixteen years and two months until December 31, 1927.

Mr. Barrett was married to the former Miss Ruby McKay of Laurinburg, North Carolina. She was educated in the Laurinburg Schools and at Meredith College at Raleigh, North Carolina. She was a loyal and devoted wife and an active worker in the church, especially in Women's Missionary Society and its Auxilliaries. During the early twenties she was an active leader and worker in The Ladies' Aid Society.

The Barretts had four children, Margaret, Charles, Ruby, and John. They were quite young when they moved here, and they grew up in this church and this community. They were taught to be loyal to the church, and they never knew any other way than to attend and participate in all the regular services of the church. This is clearly demonstrated by the oldest child, Margaret, in the following incident.

One Wednesday afternoon Margaret had a few of her school mates at her home to rehearse a community play. They were all dressed in their costumes with make-up. When the prayer meeting hour arrived, Margaret suddenly interrupted the rehearsal and marched the entire cast over to the church, costumes, make-up, and all. When the prayer service was over, they returned to her home and took up the rehearsal where they had left off.

When Mr. Barrett came here, he quickly sized up the situation. He saw the fast growing and rapidly changing community and the problems they created. New members were being received almost every week. Most of them came from small country churches where their opportunities for training were very limited. These and all those coming by profession of faith needed training. Literally hundreds of others among these newcomers had not yet been reached and enlisted. Mr. Barrett saw this as a great challenge, and he began to make preparations to meet it.

In trying to carry out these preparations, Mr. Barrett found the church ill prepared to meet this challenge. There was a Sunday School, but it was not properly graded and classified. There was a Women's Missionary Society, but its auxiliaries were missing. There was no Training Union Department at all. All these added organizations would be needed to prepare the church to handle this great influx of new and untrained members.

Another obstacle to the proper handling of this challenge was the lack of sufficient physical facilities. The church and the Sunday School were already over-crowded. If these new residents were to be brought in, trained and enlisted, the church would have to make room for them. This would necessitate a large building or enlargement program. Before this could be done, however, another obstacle must be removed. The outstanding debt of the church must be liquidated. Mr. Barrett and the church, therefore, faced a huge twofold building program. The organizational structure must be built up, and the physical accomodations must be greatly enlarged.

A number of the leaders of the church had joined the pastor in surveying these needs and in trying to work out plans for meeting them. They knew the task was too big to be done quickly or all at one time, therefore, they decided to make the first attack on these plans at the points of greatest need. As to the organizational structure, they gave priority to the training department in order that the future leaders of the church would be trained for their work. As

to the building of the needed physical facilities, the liquidation of the present indebtedness was given first priority. After these first priorities had been taken care of, they would proceed with the next steps one by one until the job was done. Thus the plans were worked out, and they were now ready to begin. Mr. Barrett himself would begin with the training department. A Finance and Building committee would work toward the liquidation of the church debt.

The Baptist Young Peoples' Union was the first organization to be started in building up the organizational structure. Mr. Barrett took personal charge of this Union and stayed with it for a whole year to make sure it was well established and able to carry on without his help. At the same time Mrs. Barrett and the W.M.S. officers began the organization of their auxiliary units.

While Mr. and Mrs. Barrett were busy with these organizational efforts, the Finance and Building committee were busy trying to work out plans for paying off the church debt. When their efforts seemed to be making little headway, Mr. Barrett suggested this unique plan. Each family would be asked to borrow its part of this debt on its own security and apply it on the payment of the debt. Mr. Barrett reasoned that if each family obligated itself personally for these amounts, they would pay them off according to terms. The plan worked as expected; the debt was paid in full; on April 9, 1914, the notes were burned at an impressive public worship service.

Soon after the debt had been paid off, and after the people had paid back their personal loans, Mr. Barrett and the leaders began planning for the new building program. Some of the members thought it was not yet a good time to begin such a large and costly undertaking. Mr. Barrett was not one to give up easily, and he continued to press for some kind of action. If the people thought it was not a good time to begin this building, they could at least begin the accumulation of a building fund in order to be ready when the proper time did come.

Soon after this plan had been approved and a start on such a fund had been made, our country was drawn into World War One; the people's attention was diverted. About the end of the year 1917, Mr. H. B. Moore at a church business meeting made this startling announcement. "I agree with most of you that this is not a good time to build. Labor and materials are too scarce and too costly, but it is a good time to accumulate and enlarge our building fund. For that purpose I have begun \$5,000.00 in building and loan shares to be added to that fund. I suggest that as many of you as can do likewise in whatever amounts you can afford." This sparked a new interest and enthusiasm; in June 1918, the people subscribed 218 new shares to this fund.

Just after the war ended in 1918, the church elected a new Building-Planning committee made up of Rev. W. C. Barrett, Chairman; W. H. Wray, Secretary; W. J. Clifford; H. B. Moore; J. R. Shufford; W. T. Storey; W. L. Wetzel; and L. F. Groves. Later, due to the deaths of H. B. Moore and L. F. Groves and the removal of J. R. Shufford from this area, J. D. Moore was added to the committee.

The committee engaged Willard G. Rogers, Charlotte Architect, to draw plans for the proposed building. The plans drawn by him had these distinctive

features. The main sanctuary was to be in the shape of a cross with the arms of the cross made into two-story transepts. The sanctuary would have a curved or vaulted ceiling; there would be curved arches over the doors and windows and the transept balconies. The windows would be of imported stained glass; there would be a large circular stained glass window over the entrance, where it would be clearly visible from the altar and choir areas. The altar, the pulpit, and the semicircular choir loft would be in the south end of the sanctuary. The main entrance would be from the north end through a large entrance foyer, with steps leading to a large balcony over the foyer and to the fellowship hall in the basement.

There would be a three story educational annex attached to the south end of the sanctuary and a full length basement under it. The basement would be equipped with a modern kitchen and a large fellowship and recreation room. The exterior would be patterned after the famous Salisbury Cathedral in England, but with many modifications. The Cathedral Spire over the entrance would be replaced by a lighthouse tower on the east side. It was indeed an ambitious project, but this pastor and his people were great dreamers; they believed that their willing sacrifices could make these dreams become realities.

When these plans had been completed and submitted to and approved by the church, the committee asked for further instructions. The church then instructed the committee to go ahead with advertising for bids and awarding contracts. It proved to be an inopportune time for it. Contractors had all the work they could do and were not interested in new contracts. Only one bid was received; it was \$294,000.00 for the general contract alone. Since both the church and the committee thought this was much too high, the bid was rejected, and the church decided to wait for a more propitious time.

This first attempt had been made in the mid year of 1919. Two years later, when builders had caught up with the post war demands, prices took a sharp drop, and building materials became more plentiful. It was the first post war slump in the building trade. The committee decided to try again. This time many bids were received. On October 12, 1921, the general contract was awarded to the Brown-Harry Company of Gastonia for the price of \$113,500.00. Other contracts for wiring, heating, plumbing, equipment and furnishings brought the total cost to approximately \$200,000.00.

Work began in less than two weeks after the contract was awarded. The first material was placed on the lot on October 17. The first concrete was poured by Mrs. Martha J. Moore on November 15. The first brick was laid by J. L. Grice, age 85, on December 9. The work proceeded on schedule so that by the end of May, 1922, it was time for the laying of the corner stone. For this occasion the church had prepared an elaborate and impressive service. Many items of interest were prepared for deposit in the corner stone, including these: The Bible; the church covenant and by-laws; a short history of the church; pictures of the former church buildings; names of pastors, church clerks, and Sunday School Superintendents; names of deacons and officers of 1922; song and hymn books; 1921 minutes of State and Southern Baptist Conventions; copies of The Baptist Messenger, The Gastonia Gazette, and the Literary Digest, and the names of the architect, the contractors, and the construction foremen.

The service was held on June 2, 1922. Mr. Barrett gave the invocation. Dr. Weston Brunner of Raleigh gave a timely and inspiring address. Mr. Barrett read a short history of the church. A copper box containing the above named items was then lowered into the hollow of the corner stone. Dr. Brunner then pronounced the benediction, and the service was over. When it was over, the workers returned to their jobs and construction proceeded as before.

The original target date for completion of the building was January or February, 1923. Unforeseen delays in obtaining certain materials and supplies extended the time to mid summer. The educational annex was made ready in July, and on July 22 the Sunday School marched in a body from the old building to the new. Three weeks later the sanctuary was ready; the first service was held in it on August 12, 1923. Dr. John R. White, President of Anderson College of Anderson, South Carolina preached the dedicatory sermon at the morning service.



Church at Corner of South and Franklin Avenue 1923.

Now at last the people of First Baptist Church of Gastonia had seen their dreams materialize and become reality. Great sacrifices had been necessary to accomplish this work, and continued sacrifices would be required to finish paying for it. Having come thus far in their venture of faith, they had not the slightest doubt that they would be able to complete this task too. Before the end of the Barrett ministry, the last dollar of indebtedness was paid in full, and the church was again free of debt.

In this matter of sacrificial giving, we cannot overlook the great contributions of the women of the church. Through their Ladies' Aid Society

they made these important contributions; carpet for the sanctuary; furnishings for the church parlor; equipment for the kitchen; the tower chimes, a pipe organ; a piano; \$10,000.00 in cash; and another \$10,000.00 in building and loan shares. All this was over and above their contributions to the regular church budget.

The men also had their own organization, The Men's League, through which they too made their special contributions. They assumed responsibility for landscaping and beautifying the grounds around the church. They built retaining walls, graded and leveled the lot, and planted grass and shrubbery. Even now, more than fifty years later, the results of their work can still be seen around the church. This too was over and above their regular contributions to the general church budget. Both the men and the women of the church wanted it to be a place of beauty, convenience, and service, and they were willing to pay the necessary price for it.

In the midst of all these feverish activities, one might expect the pastor and his people to neglect some of the other needs, but they did not do so. They kept on working patiently on the other building project, that of building up the organizational structure. Like the building of their new physical facilities, it was a slow and difficult task. By the time their new church building was ready for use, they had managed to bring the organizational structure up to prescribed standards. In his efforts to accomplish this twofold building program Mr. Barrett had neglected his own personal needs. In 1921 his work load had become so heavy that he had to ask for help.

The most pressing of these needs was for an administrative assistant. He asked for a full time assistant to handle these administrative matters so as to give him more time for preparation of his sermons and for ministering to the sick and bereaved and discouraged ones among the membership.

Since the church at that time was in the middle of its costly building program, many of the members thought the church could not afford to pay another full time staff member at that time, but Mr. Barrett believed that such an administrator would more than compensate for his salary in increased efficiency and savings. He continued to press for this relief. When the church still hesitated, he issued this daring challenge: "Go ahead and employ such a man on a one year trial basis. Then at the end of that year, if he has not more than compensated for his salary in savings and benefits to the church, he and I will both resign".

This challenge was accepted by the church, and Mr. Barrett was authorized to find and recommend a suitable man for this position. Upon the recommendation of Dr. P. E. Burroughs of the Nashville Office, he got in contact with Mr. H. O. Eisenhower of Selma, Alabama. Upon further inquiry and a personal interview, Mr. Barrett became convinced that Mr. Eisenhower was well qualified for this position. Upon his recommendation the church issued a call to Mr. Eisenhower in September, and he came to work here on October 1, 1921.

Mr. Eisenhower's duties included supervision of the finances of the church, keeping accurate records, overseeing the literature orders, contacting newcomers to town, and assisting the pastor in the supervision of all church

activities and services. Under his administrative work the entire program of the church operated in a much smoother and more efficient manner. At the end of his first year he had made himself so indispensable that the church would not even think of doing without him or someone like him. Again Mr. Barrett's keen insight and unusual foresight had been vindicated.

As we now look back upon the record of the Barrett ministry here, we are amazed at the accomplishments of this church under his leadership. For example, this same church that had a hard time paying off a \$7,000.00 debt in 1914 had during the next fourteen years built and paid for the most magnificent church building in Gaston County at a cost of \$200,000.00. During that same period the membership of the church had almost doubled. It was indeed an amazing example of faithfulness, fortitude, and sacrifice.

So long and faithfully had Rev. W. C. Barrett worked in this church that his strength was literally exhausted. After a little more than sixteen years at the helm of this church, he tendered his resignation to be effective December 31, 1927. He preached his last sermon here on January 1, 1928, and then retired with his faithful wife to their home in Laurinburg, N. C. Two and one half years later, on June 29, 1930, he departed this life and went to his heavenly reward.

Many evidences of divine guidance could be cited. But one example will be sufficient here. That example has to do with the planning and building of our present sanctuary. The need for it was evident for more than ten years before it was finally built. But instead of plunging ahead with inadequate means and building inadequate facilities, the people were restrained by divinely ordered circumstances, including World War One. Of course, God did not instigate that war, but he used it to fulfill his divine purpose.

This intervention gave the people time to make preparations and accumulate a building fund for a more worthy and adequate tribute to the Lord. Then when the war was over and the people thought they were ready in 1919, they were again restrained by high prices and scarcity of building materials. Then two years later a slowdown in the building industry enabled them to go ahead at a greatly reduced cost. And immediately after the contracts were awarded, the economy took another sharp rise which lasted until the building was completed and paid for. Surely the hand of the Lord was guiding the people of this church in taking this action at the right time. We believe he always so guides them that trust him. Now we turn to the next period to see his continued guidance through those years.

CHAPTER VII

THE PERIOD OF THE BOWERS MINISTRY, 1928-1944

Soon after the resignation of Rev. W. C. Barrett our church began its search for a new pastor. In the Spring of 1928, it extended a call to Dr. Bartlett Anthony Bowers, pastor of Broadway Baptist Church, Knoxville, Tennessee. He accepted the call and came to the work here on June 1, 1928. Dr. Bowers was a native of Lillington, N. C. He was educated in the local schools there, at the University of Pennsylvania, and at Crozier Theological Seminary. About the year 1925 Lincoln Memorial University, Harrogate, Tennessee, conferred on him the degree of Doctor of Divinity.



Dr. B. A. Bowers

Dr. Bowers was married to Miss Lemma Moss of Raleigh, North Carolina on December 16, 1897. She was a graduate of Meredith College in that city. She was not only a devoted wife and mother, but also an active worker in the church, especially in the women's organizations. To them were born four children: Helen; Catherine; Anthony, Jr. and Dorothy.

When Dr. Bowers came here, he already had many years of experience in the ministry. He had been ordained in 1905, and his former pastorates included the following:

| | |
|-----------------------------|-----------|
| Point Pleasant, New Jersey, | 1906-1909 |
| Cape May, New Jersey, | 1909-1912 |
| Belleville, New Jersey, | 1912-1914 |
| Frederick, Maryland, | 1914-1916 |
| Baltimore, Maryland, | 1916-1920 |
| Knoxville, Tennessee, | 1920-1928 |

It was from the latter of these pastorates that Dr. Bowers came to First Baptist of Gastonia. This record shows that both by academic accomplishments and by practical experience he was well prepared for his work here. He would need all of this training and experience plus all the fortitude he could muster to deal with the problems and difficulties that would soon engulf this church, none of which had been foreseen when he arrived here. Peace and prosperity had been a way of life here for so long that everybody assumed it would continue indefinitely.

The first of these difficult problems was of a local nature. At the Loray Mill, the largest textile plant in this area, an attempt had been made to unionize the workers. Although the unionization did not take place, there were enough sympathizers among the workers that a strike was called for. The

strikers were led by a Communist agitator, Fred Beal. At his instigation the strike soon erupted into violence and blood shed. Two people were killed, Police Chief O. F. Aderholdt and a mill employee, Mrs. Ella Mae Wiggins. Feelings ran high, and many people feared for their lives. After these killings, Beal fled from the scene, and the violence began to subside.

After Beal's flight the strike soon ended, but the ill feelings generated by the atrocities lingered on long after it was over. Though the people of the church were not directly involved, the aftermath of ill feelings touched the lives of all the people, including the people of the churches. During all this period of violence, excitement, and fear, Dr. Bowers tried to quiet the excitement and to calm the fears and the anxieties of his people. After a time the excitement abated and peace was again restored.

Hardly had the people of this community recovered from this local setback when a national calamity descended upon the whole country. It began with the crash of the Wall Street Stock Market. That crash was followed quickly by the total collapse of the national economy. Banks failed, causing millions of people to lose all their savings. Factories closed down, throwing their employees out of work and out of money to pay for the necessities of life. Shops and stores went bankrupt or closed their doors for lack of business. All business and manufacturing was at a complete standstill. The people knew not where to turn or what to do.

The masses of common people were not alone in this predicament. Many factory and store owners lost everything they had. Government officials were sorely perplexed. They just could not understand what had happened. They insisted that the American economy was basically sound and that business would soon recover and again become prosperous, but week after week, month after month, and year after year went by with little improvement. Full recovery was not again achieved until another war time economy brought it about in the early nineteen forties. How did all of this affect the church? How did the people of the church cope with these hardships and privations?

Of course, the first and most immediate effect was a radical reduction in the church's income. To cope with this problem expenditures had to be cut to the barest minimum. In this effort the church was extremely fortunate in still having H. O. Eisenhower as Administrative Officer. He saw to it that every possible saving was made and that every nickle of church income was spent wisely. The pastor and all his staff members cooperated by voluntarily taking substantial cuts in salary. Purchases were reduced to the barest necessities. Though for the most of the people it was a time of privation and want, they learned to share what they did have with one another. In this they achieved a degree of unity and fellowship which they had not known before.

This mutual sharing and generosity did not stop at the local level. It reached out to the unfortunate everywhere. This was especially evident in the church's continued support of Home and Foreign Missions. Of course their contributions were very small in comparison to their former gifts to these causes. In comparison with their greatly reduced incomes they were very generous. Years later, when their incomes increase, their contributions increased accordingly. For example, the total budget of the church rose from a low of \$11,723.00 in 1941 to a new high of \$32,422.00 in 1944.

Another noteworthy feature of the church during that long depression period was the fact that it did not reduce the number of its staff members, even in the worst years of that trying time. In fact, new staff members were added, and when one of them resigned, the church immediately replaced that one with another. For instance, when Mr. Eisenhower resigned in 1933, he was replaced immediately by another able administrator, Mr. A. G. Wallis. Other replacements and additions included: Owen Moran, Miss Nita Belle Scarborough, Rev. Koy Peterson, Miss Naomi Braswell, L. C. Alexander, Miss Beth Howell, Miss Lucille Welch, and Miss Euwilda Littlejohn.

This gives us an idea of the loyalty and sacrifices of our people during that long period of stress, strain, and want. Another notable characteristic of our people at that time was their great evangelistic zeal in trying to win the lost. As a result there were 1627 additions to the church during this time. That was an average of more than 100 per year for the entire sixteen year period. This prompted someone later to raise this question: If there were 883 members when Dr. Bowers came here, and 1627 were added while he was here for a grand total of 2510, why were there only 1147 members when he left? What happened to the other 1363?

The answer is quite simple. Scores of members were lost by death. Hundreds were given letters of transfer to other churches. A number of them entered the ministry and other full time Christian services. Through these transfers to other churches and through these commitments to full time Christian services then our church has extended its influence and Christian witness to all parts of our country and even to the world.

Another outstanding feature of this church during that trying period was its program of teaching, training and witnessing. Every organization and department was maintained at a high standard of efficiency, and every unit was kept busy. This helped tremendously in the great evangelistic outreach described above. It seemed to be a churchwide effort.

The depression lasted many years, and even when recovery did begin, it progressed very slowly. When this slow process seemed about to succeed, another world catastrophe brought even greater fear and anxiety. It was the Second World War in which our country became involved late in the year 1941. Again our finest young men were called into military service of their country and sent to the battle fronts all over the world. Some lost their lives in that bitter conflict, and many others sustained physical or mental impairments that would stay with them for years or for the rest of their lives. Dr. Bowers tried faithfully to comfort the bereaved and to counsel with those who feared what might happen to their loved ones. Nothing could bring real relief until the war was over and the survivors were again safe at home. For those who lost loved ones, even the end of the war would leave an aching void in their lives.

One more noteworthy thing about the people of this church during all these turbulent periods was their faithfulness in attendance and their care of the church property. They not only made full use of this property, but they made additions and kept what they already had in good repair. In 1937 they built a new scout hut for the boys. They painted and redecorated the parsonage. The sanctuary was repaired and repainted. The ceiling was covered with celotex to improve the acoustics. Even the outside surroundings were

kept carefully groomed and beautified. All this was looked upon as a labor of love to show their gratitude to God for his care and blessings.

In all of these things Dr. Bowers had been an active participant and a faithful servant. After all these years his strength was literally exhausted. He tendered his resignation as pastor of this church to become effective on May 31, 1944. He had not only been a great leader and a great servant at First Baptist Church, but also in the community, the state, and the nation. In the community he served as President of the Gastonia Ministerial Association and as an active member of the Kiwanis Club. In the state he was a Trustee of Meredith College and a member of The State Mission Board. In the Southern Baptist Convention he was President of The Ridgecrest Assembly, Chairman of its Management Committee, Member of the Sunday School Board, and President of The Crozier Seminary Association of The South. He also conducted many revivals in leading churches of this and adjoining states.

After his resignation Dr. Bowers moved to his home at Ridgecrest for his retirement years. He looked forward to an extended period of rest and relaxation there. After a few weeks in the cool, invigorating mountain air, he felt much stronger. When he heard the urgent calls of pastorless churches for temporary help, he could not resist the calls. He served as interim pastor at many places, including the following: Ocala, West Palm Beach, and North Miami Beach in Florida; and Canton, Marion, Mooresville, Asheville, Kings Mountain, and Cramerton in North Carolina.

While paying tribute to this remarkable man of God, we cannot overlook the high esteem in which his beloved wife, Lemma Moss Bowers, was held in Women's Circles throughout the Southern Baptist Convention. In her local church, in the State Convention, and throughout the Southern Baptist Convention she was widely known and widely acclaimed as an outstanding leader in Women's Missionary endeavors. Mrs. Bowers was claimed by death February 7, 1951. Dr. Bowers was married the second time to Mrs. Leona Wells Atkinson, who continues to live in Belmont at this time.

Some men in this world are blessed with unusual strength and long life. Dr. Bartlett Anthony Bowers was one of these men. After more than forty years in the active ministry and another twenty years on interim supply work, Dr. Bowers reached the end of his earthly pilgrimage on February 13, 1965. Last rites were conducted here at First Baptist Church where he held his last active pastorate. Dr. A. D. Aldrich, pastor of this church, and Rev. Walter N. Long of Belmont First Baptist Church, were in charge. They paid high tribute to the long life of faithful service of this man, but the record of his life and work was all the eulogy that was needed.

When we look back upon the life and leadership of this man during the most turbulent periods in the history of this church, we are reminded again of God's blessing and guidance of this church. He not only brought this man and this church together for that momentous period, but he has continued to lead this church to able and qualified and dedicated leaders through every critical period of its history. In many other areas in the life and work of the church his guiding hand has been clearly evident.

CHAPTER VIII

THE PERIOD OF THE BARR MINISTRY, 1944-1962

Soon after the resignation of Dr. B. A. Bowers our church elected a Pulpit Committee to begin the search for a new pastor. After numerous inquiries, visits and interviews the committee was led to recommend Dr. V. Ward Barr of Corinth, Mississippi. In order that our people might meet and get acquainted with him he was invited to preach here on September 10, 1944. The church was favorably impressed and voted unanimously to call him as its new pastor. He accepted the call and began his work here October 22, 1944.



Dr. V. Ward Barr

Dr. V. Ward Barr was born at Mansfield, Louisiana November 28, 1912. He was a graduate of Mansfield High School and of Louisiana State University, where he earned an A. B. degree. He then enrolled in Tulane University Medical School to prepare for a career in medicine and surgery. After one year there, he yielded to the call to the ministry and transferred to Southern Baptist Theological Seminary of Louisville, Kentucky, where he earned The Master of Theology and The Doctor of Philosophy degrees.

Dr. Barr was married to Miss Myrtle Cutrer of Baton Rouge, Louisiana, August 7, 1935. She was a graduate of Louisiana State University with a degree in Music. She also attended classes at the Seminary while Dr. Barr was a student there. She was an accomplished musician and served as First Baptist Church Organist for fourteen years. She was active in W. M. U. work and at one time served as president. She was active in Gastonia Music Club and was a Trustee of Gardner Webb College.

The Barrs had two children: Ward, Jr. was born December 10, 1939. After finishing Medical School at Tulane University with a degree in Neurosurgery, he served his internship at Birmingham, Alabama hospitals. He was associated with Dr. Heinz K. Faludi in Neurological Surgery at Shreveport, La. He has now moved to Lancaster, Pennsylvania.

David Brewster, born June 10, 1943, attended Tulane University, The University of North Carolina, and did post graduate work in Paris, France. He specialized in English literature and is now engaged in teaching and writing at Chapel Hill, North Carolina.

In addition to his academic training, Dr. Barr's experience included student pastorates at Bedford and Sulphur, Kentucky. Full time pastorates before coming here were three years at University Baptist Church, Coral Gables, Florida; and eight years at First Baptist Church, Corinth, Mississippi.

Dr. Barr's religious experience included his conversion and baptism at Converse Baptist Church in Sabine Parish, Louisiana in 1921, and ordination to the ministry at First Baptist Church of Mansfield, Louisiana in September 1934. His denominational experience includes: Moderator of the South Fork Association of Kentucky, Moderator of the Alcorn County Association of Mississippi, Trustee of Blue Mountain College of Blue Mountain, Mississippi, Trustee of N. C. Baptist Hospital and 1953 Director of its Fund Raising Campaign; Member of General Board, North Carolina Baptist State Convention, and Member of Southern Baptist Convention Foreign Mission Board. He also served on a number of special committees and several preaching and teaching Missions.

Dr. Barr also widely traveled in Europe and The Bible Lands of The Middle East. He made two extended tours to the Holy Land, and served as Director of the second tour. After his return he showed many slide pictures of the places he visited and gave a number of lectures on the geography and history of the Middle East Countries.

This gives us some idea of the wide knowledge and experience of Dr. Barr who served as pastor of this church for almost eighteen years. Of course his major interest and concern was for the people of this church and his ministry to their needs. As we shall see in this account of his ministry, those needs were many. One of the first and foremost of these special needs was his ministry to the victims of the Second World War which was then far into its third year of American involvement. One of Dr. Barr's first acts after coming here was to arrange for the church to remain open twenty-four hours a day for those who wished to go there for prayer or for counseling. He made himself available on call at any hour of the day or night for such counseling.

Ministering to the needs of these troubled and bereaved war victims was no new experience for Dr. Barr. For the past three years he had faced the same conditions and needs in his church in Corinth, Mississippi. He knew the needs of these suffering and sorrowing people; and he moved immediately to give them all the comfort and encouragement he could. This special ministry continued until the war was over and the survivors were again safe at home. The end of the war did not bring an end to suffering and need. In a church of this size, there were constant calls for ministering to the ill and bereaved. To meet this continuing need Dr. Barr instituted a special radio ministry called "The Minister at his Desk".

In connection with this special ministry Dr. Barr invited anyone in the community who had a special problem or need to bring it to him. He would then counsel and pray with each one personally. Each Sunday night he would, without revealing their identity, use these problems as material for his radio talks. By this method he hoped he could be of help to others with similar problems. This program proved to be very popular, and it drew many interested listeners. Meanwhile, he kept himself available at all times to all who wished to discuss their problems with him confidentially.

In addition to the needs of these victims of war-induced troubles there were other pressing needs demanding attention. These needs included a better system of church financing, a full complement of staff assistants, and a new educational building. Some of these needs must be attended to immediately,

and long range planning for the others must be begun.

Since it was already time to plan the coming year's church budget, the revision of the church finance plan was attacked first. Under the old system, or lack of a system, special collections for special causes was the order of the day for almost every month of the year. This made it extremely difficult for the people to determine just how their tithes and offerings should be divided and apportioned to each cause. As a result, some causes received more than their fair share of the total and others received less.

To remedy this confusion and to correct these inequities Dr. Barr suggested a new plan called The Unified Budget System. Under this plan all the causes supported by the church would be included in one over all budget. Each cause would be given its fair percentage of the total church income as predetermined by the church. There would be only one offering each week for the support of all these causes. Guesswork, confusion, and inequities would thus be eliminated.

The Deacons, the Finance Committee, and the Church liked this proposal. The new plan was adopted by unanimous vote. To put the plan into effect required three things: the amount of the new budget must be determined, the percentage allotted to each cause had to be decided, and pledges of the members in support of the budget must be secured.

To determine the amount of the total budget, all contributions to all causes during the past year were totaled up. The amount of the new budget was set a little higher than that total. Slight adjustments were made in the amounts received by each cause during the past year, and the percentages were decided on that basis. The securing of membership pledges was then the final step in the implementation of this plan.

For securing these pledges the Finance Committee then worked out the following plan: Pledge cards were distributed to all the members. A Sunday in November was designated as "Victory Day", and every member was asked to fill out and return his card no later than that day. On that same afternoon the deacons tried to contact everyone who had failed to get his card to the church on time. "Victory Day" was a huge success, and the new budget was oversubscribed on that one day. This plan has been followed every year since that time, and it continues to be oversubscribed each year. In view of the simplicity and success of this plan, we are made to wonder why it was not thought of and adopted many years sooner.

The next need to receive the attention of the church was that of rebuilding the Church Staff to its full complement of workers. Some of the staff members had resigned during the interim period before Dr. Barr's arrival on the scene and they needed to be replaced. Only three part time workers remained: Mrs. Clarence Eden, Adult Choir Director; Mrs. Robert Miller, Church Organist; and Mr. A. G. Wallis, Church Clerk. There was only one full time staff worker, Euwilda Littlejohn, Bookkeeper and Secretary.

In surveying these needs, it was felt that a fully graded music ministry to all age groups was needed. Mrs. Eden was doing an excellent job with the Adult Choir, but she did not have time to carry out a full program for all age groups. With her full consent and agreement, the church then began looking

for a full time Minister of Music. Upon the recommendation of Dr. Barr, a call was extended to W. G. Stroupe of Texarkana, Texas, to fill this position. He accepted the call and came to work here in June, 1945. He served in this position for two and a half years until December, 1947. Others following him in this ministry came in this order: Carl Kosanke, September, 1948; Cecil Hall, October, 1953; Paul Puckett, February, 1957; and Carroll Dellinger, January, 1960.

As the church grew and the work increased, other staff workers were added. Youth Directors came in this order: Miss Virginia Beal, November, 1950; W. Bernard Barber, August, 1956; Miss Paige Bunche, April, 1961; and Miss Juanita LeSeure, July, 1962. Elementary workers were Miss Marcel Ludlum, August, 1957 and Miss Janice King, August, 1962. New office workers included a Pastor's secretary and a Financial Secretary.

For many years Dr. Barr tried to carry his load without a pastoral assistant. In 1959, the load became too heavy for one man alone to carry, and he had to ask the church for an associate pastor. The church approved his request and upon his recommendation called Rev. Elliot B. Stewart from Riley's Creek Baptist Church in Wilmington, North Carolina Association. Mr. Stewart came to us in January, 1960, and served faithfully to the end of the Barr ministry in 1962, and on through the long interim period until the coming of the next pastor.

During all this time the leaders of the church had been planning and working toward the building of a much needed Educational Building, and a new home for the pastor and his family. The war and post war conditions that followed had prevented the accomplishment of these building projects for several years. During that time, the church had been making efforts to accumulate and build up a building fund in order to be ready when conditions were right.

In the meantime, a building committee had been elected consisting of the following personnel: E. R. Morgan, Chairman; Mrs. Charlie Moore; Mrs. Fred Jones; W. B. Hair; and S. A. Burts.

In the Spring of 1949, the church decided that conditions were now favorable for the construction of the much needed new parsonage, and instructed this committee to proceed at once. The committee employed Frank Griffin, a local architect, to draw the plans. When these plans were completed and approved by the church, the committee called for bids on the construction. On June 6, 1949, the general contract was awarded to D. Glenn Stroupe at a price of \$31,660.00. Other contracts for plumbing, heating, wiring, fixtures, and landscaping brought the total cost to approximately \$40,000.00. The building was completed one year later, and Dr. Barr and his family moved into it immediately.

The parsonage problem was solved. Now the church turned its full attention to the major task of constructing the new educational building. For this project the church elected a new Building Committee made up of representatives from all organizations and departments of the church. Upon the recommendation of W. M. Farris, Chairman of the Nominating Committee, the following persons from these various departments were nominated and

elected: M. O. Thornburg, W. M. Farris, Ernest Kluttz, Carl Kosanke, Forest Roberts, Mrs. Charles Hawkins, Miss Jinsie Underwood, Miss Virginia Beall, James Haynsworth, Ralph Jordan, Mrs. K. P. Mott, Mrs. Charlie Moore, Mrs. Jean Stapleton, D. C. McSwain, Robert Wren, W. B. Hair, S. A. Burts, and T. L. Looper. From this larger committee an executive committee, consisting of these five members, was appointed: Robert Wren, Chairman; W. B. Hair; S. A. Burts; M. O. Thornburg; and Forest C. Roberts.

Mr. W. B. Hair of this committee then asked the church for authority to employ an architect to draw plans for the proposed building. The request was granted, and the committee employed the James C. Wise architectural firm of Atlanta, Georgia. When the plans were completed and approved by the church, Mr. Wise estimated the cost at approximately \$320,000.00. Since the church had previously voted to delay the letting of contracts until at least half of the estimated cost had been accumulated in the building fund, the cash on hand in that fund would need to be at least \$160,000.00. Mr. G. G. Willis, Building Fund Treasurer, reported only \$115,000.00 on hand at that time. Hence a drive was immediately launched to raise another \$45,000.00 to bring it up to the required amount. In June, 1953, Mr. Willis reported that this goal had been reached. The church then instructed the committee to call for bids and award construction contracts.

As instructed, the committee called for bids, but when the bids were opened about the first of August, 1953, they were much higher than had been estimated or expected. The church decided to reject all bids and begin all over again. The committee then in consultation with the architect made several revisions in the original plans in an effort to reduce construction costs. At the same time, the committee decided to investigate other alternatives. It finally decided to employ an experienced contractor to supervise the purchase of materials and construction of the building.

After some investigation, the committee learned that Mr. E. R. Morgan, a widely experienced local contractor and a member of this church, was available on these conditions. His own employees would be used to do the construction work, and his own equipment would be used at a nominal cost. The committee and the church agreed and Mr. Morgan was employed for this project. The work got under way in the early Summer of 1954. The building was completed late in the year 1955. Its formal opening was observed on December 11, 1955.

The new educational building was four stories high. It contained office space for the pastor, the church staff, and the office workers. It had six Sunday School Assembly Rooms with class rooms adjoining. It had a beautiful and well equipped chapel with a seating capacity of more than two hundred. There was a fine kitchenette on the basement floor. The total cost of this building with all its equipment and furnishings was approximately \$400,000.00. By the time it was finished and occupied, approximately 65% of the cost had been paid. The balance was paid off in full only a few years later.

For several years before this educational building was constructed, the Sunday School had suffered for lack of space. Now that sufficient space was available, an immediate effort was made to bring the Sunday School up to prescribed standards for a standard Sunday School. The whole Sunday School

was reorganized, regraded, and reclassified by adding many new departments and new classes. Training courses were held for all the teachers and officers in order to make the Sunday School a real teaching and witnessing arm of the church. As a result, the Sunday School entered into one of its greatest periods of growth and expansion in all of its history.

What we have reported in this chapter should give the reader some idea of the aims and goals and the accomplishments of Dr. Barr during his long and faithful period of service here. He was a great leader, and his leadership inspired in his people a high degree of loyalty and commitment on the part of the whole membership of the church. He still had more great dreams for the future of this church, and he looked forward to many more years of service here. A tragic accident, however, on September 14, 1962, brought an abrupt end to his earthly ministry. The accident occurred at a railroad crossing in Kentwood, Louisiana. Mrs. Barr was killed instantly; and Dr. Barr died two days later. Their bodies were returned here for appropriate memorial services, and then returned to his native Louisiana for interment. Thus ended the brilliant careers of Dr. and Mrs. Barr. After eighteen years our church again found itself without a pastor.



Church at Corner of South and Frankin Avenue 1976.

CHAPTER IX

THE PERIOD OF THE ALDRICH MINISTRY, 1963?

For the next ten months after the death of Dr. V. Ward Barr, First Baptist Church was without a regular pastor. During that time it was served by the Associate Pastor, Rev. Elliot B. Stewart and by a part time interim pastor, Dr. Pope A. Duncan of Southeastern Seminary at Wake Forest, North Carolina. Dr. Duncan served only on weekends, thus leaving all the rest of the work to The Associate Pastor. He did not complain, nor did he leave the church in this time of need. He remained on the job and served faithfully until the church had secured a new pastor. He then resigned to accept the work to which he had already been called, the pastorate of the Baptist church at Trinity, North Carolina.

A few weeks after the death of Dr. Barr the church elected a Pulpit Committee consisting of the following personnel: W. B. Hair, E. W. Brockman, Frank Young, John Markham, Robert Wren, Mrs. J. C. Carothers, Mrs. W. M. Farris, Mrs. Hugh Beveridge, and Mrs. James Haynsworth. After searching far and wide, the committee was finally led to recommend Dr. Allan Douglas Aldrich of the Forest Hills Baptist Church of Raleigh, North Carolina. In June 1963, the church approved this recommendation and extended the call. Dr. Aldrich accepted the call, moved to Gastonia, and assumed his new duties here on July 15, 1963.

Dr. Allan Douglas Aldrich was born at Painted Post, New York, December 16, 1921. While he was yet a small child, the family moved to Florida, and he grew up in the city of Orlando. After High School there, he attended Mars Hill College for two years, and then transferred to Wake Forest for his junior and senior years. At Wake Forest he earned his A. B. degree in 1944. From there he went to Southern Baptist Theological Seminary of Louisville, Kentucky. There he earned the Bachelor of Divinity degree in 1947 and the Master of Theology degree in 1948. He continued his education in Summer Study Seminars for three summers at Union Theological Seminary of New York City and for three summers at Princeton Theological Seminary of Princeton, New Jersey. He also had a six week course in the School of Pastoral Care at North Carolina Baptist Hospital of Winston Salem, North Carolina. Then in 1967 his Alma Mater, Wake Forest, conferred on him the honorary degree of Doctor of Divinity.

Dr. Aldrich was married to Miss Edna Lou Lamb of Ingold, North Carolina August 9, 1945. She is a graduate of Ingold High School, Mars Hill College, and Meredith College of Raleigh. Incidentally, Dr. and Mrs. Aldrich first met while they were in school together at Mars Hill during the 1941-1942 school year. This acquaintance developed into friendship, the friendship into love, and the love into marriage four years later. Naturally any mention of Mars Hill or Meredith College to them brings back many fond memories.

To this union were born two children: Judith Anne (better known as Judy), March 19, 1949, and Joseph Douglas (Joe to his family and friends), September 26, 1951. Judy is married to Geoffry Alan Planer, a promising young attorney now living in Gastonia. Joe, since his graduation from college,

has been with The Union Carbide Company of Asheboro, North Carolina until recently. In the Spring of 1976 he felt a call to the gospel ministry, and he is now a student at Southern Baptist Theological Seminary in Louisville, Kentucky, preparing himself for that calling.

Mrs. Aldrich has chosen to work quietly, but most effectively, as a minister's wife. Her efforts have been largely in the areas of training and Spiritual Life Development. She has taught in our Sunday School, first in the Young Adult groups. At the present time, she is serving as organizer and coordinator of a training class for future teachers for our Sunday School.

She has worked diligently with her husband in trying to establish a "Better Homes Club" for the purpose of strengthening the homes of our people.

The Woman's Missionary Union has benefited greatly from her leadership in the area of Mission Study and Weeks of Prayer Programs. Hours of her time have gone into these efforts. She and her husband have been able to bring to these occasions some of our finest Southern Baptist Leaders and Missionaries. Her quiet, but staunch support of Dr. Aldrich in his work has been a fine example of Christian dedication.

Dr. Allan Douglas Aldrich was ordained to the gospel ministry in December, 1942, by the Calvary Baptist Church of Raleigh, North Carolina, where he served as student pastor from 1942 to 1944. His other student pastorates were Fort Myers, Florida, Summer of 1945; and North Springfield, Tennessee, 1946-1948. His full time pastorates include the First Baptist Church, La Follette, Tennessee, 1948-1951 and the Forest Hills Baptist Church of Raleigh, 1951-1963.

Other activities and services of Dr. Aldrich include the following. Since 1969 he has served on our Mayor's Human Relations Commission. He has been active in the Gastonia United Fund Campaign Committee and has served on its Executive Board and its Social Planning Council. In State Baptist Affairs he served twelve years as Trustee of Wake Forest University; three years as Trustee of Shaw University, and four years as Trustee of Meredith College. He also served as Second Vice President of the North Carolina Baptist State Convention, and as a member of its Executive Board. In Southern Baptist Convention affairs he has been a Trustee of Southern Seminary of Louisville since 1967, and served as Chairman in 1974 and 1975. He wrote Sunday School lessons for three different quarters as follows: Young People, Uniform Series, October to December 1967; Adult Life and Work Series, April to June, 1972; Advanced Studies, Life and Work Series, April to June, 1975. He served as Preacher, Teacher, Leader, and Lecturer in many other Seminars and Conferences through the years. He has recently been elected to a fourth term as Trustee of Wake Forest University and is also engaged in writing a fourth series of Sunday School Lessons to be published in 1978.

The above information gives us an idea of the caliber of the man now serving as pastor of First Baptist Church of Gastonia. All this training and experience has prepared him well for ministering to the needs of the people of this church and community. What were the special needs here when he came to this church? How have these needs been met and handled?

One of the pressing needs here at that time was for the proper handling of the Human Relations Issues. The School Integration Program had caused racial tensions to flare up among both whites and blacks, and these tensions were threatening to flare up into violence. Dr. Aldrich and the other members of The Mayor's Human Relations Commission managed to help resolve these differences peacefully so that our community has suffered little racial tension and no real violence at all. Both the church and the community owe this Commission a great debt of gratitude for its spendid work of handling this touchy issue.

A second pressing need of our church at that time was the need of recruiting new church staff members to bring the staff up to an efficient level. The most urgent of these needs was for an Associate Pastor and a Minister of Music.

A third very urgent need was for the renovation of our church sanctuary. It was now more than forty years old, and beginning to deteriorate rather rapidly. The roof was leaking, the plaster was crumbling, and the celotex was falling from the ceiling.

The church and the pastor were keenly aware of these needs, and they began immediately to make plans to take care of them. The renovation of the sanctuary would require long and careful planning, but the recruitment of new staff members could begin immediately. The church authorized the pastor to begin his search for a new Associate Pastor and a new Minister of Music.

The first of these recommendations brought by Dr. Aldrich was that Adrian M. Littlejohn of First Baptist Church of Ahoskie, North Carolina be employed as Minister of Music. Mr. Littlejohn was a graduate of the School of Music of The Southern Baptist Theological Seminary at Louisville, Kentucky, and he was then serving as Minister of Music at the Ahoskie church. The church approved the recommendation and issued the call to him. He accepted the call and began his work here in January, 1964.

The next recommendation was for an Associate Pastor. For this position Dr. Aldrich recommended Rev. C. Burt Potter. The church extended a call to him in June, 1964, and he came to the work here on August 1, 1964. He remained two years. When he left, the pastor recommended Rev. Charles B. Summey to succeed him. He was given the title, Minister of Education and Administration with the understanding that he would also serve as Associate Pastor when the pastor was away from his pulpit. He came to us in the latter part of 1966, and is still serving faithfully and efficiently in that position.

Other staff members who have served during the period of the Aldrich Ministry include: Charles B. DuRant, Minister of Music, who replaced Mr. Littlejohn in August, 1973; Gene Webb, Minister of Youth, 1968-1970; Larry Keaton, Minister of Youth, 1970-1973; Calvin Dellinger, Minister of Youth, 1975 to present time. In addition to these the church also employs a Pastor's Secretary, a Financial Secretary, and a Receptionist.

While all of these other matters were being done, the church was also working on plans for the renovation of the sanctuary. To lead our people in this planning, the church elected a Renovation Committee consisting of these persons: J. Robert Wren, Chairman, Mrs. Hugh Beveridge, Hoyt Butler, C. E.

Cheatham, Mrs. W. M. Farris, Charles Froneberger, Earl Groves, W. B. Hair, Mrs. Helen Haynes, Loyd Hoffman, Fred Jones, James Mullen, C. P. Nanney; and ex-officio members, Dr. A. D. Aldrich, Rev. Charles B. Summey, and Adrian Littlejohn.

The Renovation Committee employed The James C. Wise Architectural Firm of Atlanta, Georgia, to draw the plans for the complete renovation of the rapidly deteriorating sanctuary. While these plans were being prepared, the committee and the church took steps to prevent future damage and deterioration to the interior which had been caused by many leaks in the roof. By the time the new roof had been installed the renovation plans for the interior of the sanctuary were ready.

The plans as first drawn called for a complete change in the architectural design of the interior of the sanctuary. The original design featured curved arches and a curved vault type ceiling. All these curved arch designs were to be replaced by pointed arches, including the ceiling, the choir loft, the transepts, and the doors and windows. In view of the high cost of making some of these changes the committee in consultation with the architects made these modifications: Only the ceiling and the transept balcony curves would be changed. All the rest of the curved arches would remain unchanged.

When the plans were thus revised and approved, the committee called for bids. The contract was awarded to the C. P. Street Construction Company of Charlotte in the summer of 1966. Work began almost immediately, and the renovation was completed in the late Summer of 1967. The dedication service was held on September 17, 1967. It was like a real home-coming, for during all those months the church had been holding its Sunday Morning worship services in the Webb Theater, diagonally across the street from the church.

In the renovated sanctuary the blending of the two styles of architecture resulted in an unbelievably beautiful and usable house of worship. To really understand its beauty, its symmetry, and its meaning, one needs to see it through the eyes of an experienced interpreter. To help us do that we are reproducing here the interpretation given by our pastor, Dr. A. D. Aldrich, on the occasion of the dedication service.

"In the decision to renovate the First Baptist Church sanctuary there was a desire to continue building upon the foundation laid by those who preceded us. Those who participated in the planning and building of this magnificent structure in 1921-1923 obviously sought to express the cardinal truths of the Christian faith in architectural symbols.

"The sanctuary was built in the form of a cross. And a huge stone cross stands above the entrance as a reminder that each one comes into Christ's church under the arms of the cross. The rose window speaks of Christ's sacrificed life. The stained glass windows transform the light from the outside into multi-colored beauty — a symbol of the grace of God that transforms all it touches. The arches over the entrance and over the windows portray the strength and symmetry found in the Christian life. The lighthouse tower on the outside is a reminder of the church's witness to the world.

"In the renovated sanctuary an attempt was made to adapt these great historical truths to the contemporary age. The central aisle portrays life's

pilgrimage as God's people enter the sanctuary to worship their Maker and to commit themselves to Him, and then go forth to witness and minister in the world.

"The central aisle gives an unobstructed view of and access to the Lord's Memorial Table. The central cross above the baptistry provides not only a focal point, but also declares the heart of the Christian faith as it is found in the death, burial, and resurrection of Jesus Christ.

"The central pulpit is a declaration that the central act of worship is the proclamation of the Word of God. Two lecterns, one on either side, stand by the central pulpit. One stands for the Word of God, without which the central pulpit would be without a message. The other symbolized the educational ministries, without which the central pulpit would be at a loss in the interpretation of its message.

"The seating of the congregation, the choir, and the ministers gives the effect of gathering around the Lord's Table for each worship service.

"The blending of the colors to harmonize with the original windows speaks of the joining together of the generations and points toward the priceless value of Christ's church and her united fellowship at her best. This harmony is deepened by the strains of the new Zimmer Pipe Organ.

"So this generation adds its contribution to generations past in transmitting its faith to the future."

This interpretation, of course, applies to the sanctuary itself. In the total renovation program other facilities also were added. They include a new stainless steel kitchen, a remodeled and enlarged dining room, a beautifully furnished church parlor, a memorial library, a youth Sunday School department, and a redecoration of the entire church complex to harmonize with the renovated sanctuary.

This renovation and remodeling program was indeed a major undertaking; and the total cost ran well over half a million dollars. This church has a history of undertaking and carrying out major building projects, and this project was undertaken in the same spirit of faith, love, and sacrifice. The proof of its people's continued loyalty is shown in the fact that in the comparatively short period of nine years the debt incurred in this project has now been paid in full.

The cost of this renovation project in dollars and cents far exceeds that of any other building project in the entire history of our church, but in light of the number of members and of economic conditions at the time, each building project was a major undertaking. In each case our people proved their loyalty by their liberal support of that project. Thus each need of the past has been met, but it seems that as soon as one need has been taken care of, another need arises, especially in a large and growing church such as ours.

The latest such need to arise in this church is that of providing fellowship and recreational facilities for all our people of all age groups. As a first step in meeting this need our church recently purchased a large tract of land on South Union Road at a cost of more than \$85,000.00. We do not yet know what the full development of this property will cost, but whatever the cost may be, we are sure that our people will do as they have done in the past. They will carry

it out to completion.

Incidentally, there was another important consideration in the purchase of this large tract. If and when it should become necessary to relocate our church, as some of the down-town churches have already done, this property will be an ideal place for that new location. No such move is contemplated for the immediate future, but if the need does arise, our church will have a suitable place for it.

While all these things were being done, our pastor and his staff of assistants were trying to take care of all the other needs of our people. Among these efforts was the carrying out of a fully graded program of music for all age groups and the introduction of many new and inovative approaches toward making our worship services and our teaching and training programs more interesting and effective. There was also an effort to reduce racial prejudices, improve family relationships, promote interdenominational cooperation, and to relate the church to the community and its needs.

These are some of the programs and accomplishments of our church, under the leadership of Dr. Aldrich and his associates. We could go on indefinitely pointing out specific needs and what is being done to meet and minister to those needs, but these are enough to show the general trend of The Period of the Aldrich Ministry. We cannot yet make a full evaluation of it, because it is still in progress and not yet finished. This will be left for a future historian to do.

Now as we bring this centennial story to a close, we are reminded that those who went before us did a great work in promoting and furthering the kingdom of our Lord in this community. They laid a solid foundation, and we of the present generation are trying to build on that foundation. They left us a great heritage. We are stewards of that heritage, and we must be ever mindful of our Lord's requirement that "It is required in stewards that a man be found faithful" (I Cor. 4:2). If we continue to follow the leadership of our faithful pastor and his associates, the future accomplishments of this church can be even greater than those of the past. We believe in this church as the body of Christ. We believe in Christ as its head. We believe his promise that whatsoever we shall ask in his name, he will do it. What more do we need to assure a glorious future for our church?

With these assurances then we now launch our church into its second century of Christian witness and Christian service. We close with the scriptural benediction so aptly used at the end of our church covenant. "Now the God of peace, that brought again from the dead our Lord Jesus, that great shepherd of the sheep, through the blood of the everlasting covenant, make you perfect in every good work to do his will, working in you that which is well pleasing in his sight, through Jesus Christ; to whom be glory for ever and ever. Amen" (Hebrews 13:20-21)



Dr. Aldrich standing in front of partial remaining wall of church on Long and Marietta.

ADDENDUM

CHARTER MEMBERS OF FIRST BAPTIST CHURCH

| | | |
|--------------------|-----------------|-----------------|
| E. C. McAlister | T. G. Chalk | Isabella Smith |
| Martha McAlister | Lizzie J. Chalk | C. C. Smith |
| Jonas Jenkins | M. N. Chalk | P. C. Gladden |
| Sara Jenkins | S. F. Chalk | Jemima Fayssoux |
| Gaston Littlejohn | S. A. Smyre | R. L. Johnson |
| J. W. Smith | C. H. Lay | Eliza Johnson |
| V. S. Smith | S. F. Lay | Martha M. Glenn |
| Rev. Sylvanus Head | Eliza Lay | Martha Capps |
| Rebecca S. Head | Mrs. Alfred Lay | J. A. Mason |
| J. R. Robinson | Sarah Lay | |

Sunday School Superintendent: Rev. Sylvanus Head

Deacons: T. G. Chalk
J. W. Smith
R. L. Johnson

PASTORS OF FIRST BAPTIST CHURCH

| | |
|---------------------------------|--------------------------------|
| Rev. P. R. Elam (1876-1877) | Rev. E. F. Jones (1893-1896) |
| Rev. A. P. Pugh (1878-1880) | Rev. C. H. Durham (1896-1898) |
| Rev. P. R. Elam (1880-1881) | Rev. W. F. Watson (1899-1903) |
| Rev. G. P. Webb (1881) | Rev. W. H. Reddish (1903-1911) |
| Rev. J. H. Booth (1881-1882) | Rev. W. C. Barrett (1911-1927) |
| Rev. D. W. Thomason (1882-1883) | Dr. B. A. Bowers (1928-1944) |
| Rev. A. L. Stough (1883-1885) | Dr. V. Ward Barr (1944-1962) |
| Rev. J. A. White (1885-1889) | Dr. A. Douglas Aldrich (1963—) |
| Rev. F. C. Hixon (1889-1893) | |

SUNDAY SCHOOL SUPERINTENDENTS OR DIRECTORS

| | | |
|------------------|--------------------|------------------------|
| Sylvanus Head | W. J. Clifford | R. A. Evans |
| T. G. Chalk | W. H. Wray | F. C. Roberts, Sr. |
| J. D. Moore, Sr. | M. O. Thornburg | Earle W. Brockman, Sr. |
| L. L. Jenkins | Van A. Covington | John Markham |
| C. A. Jones | M. O. Thornburg | Earle W. Brockman, Sr. |
| L. L. Jenkins | W. B. Hair, Sr. | Herbert Price |
| Joe S. Wray | M. O. Thornburg | William (Bill) Blalock |
| L. L. Jenkins | D. C. McSwain | William (Bill) Pearson |
| Joe S. Wray | F. C. Roberts, Sr. | |

CHURCH TREASURERS

The first treasurer on record was elected when the church was reorganized in 1885.

| | |
|------------------|-----------------------------------|
| J. D. Moore, Sr. | 1885—1889 |
| L. L. Jenkins | 1889—1893 |
| W. H. Huffman | June 4, 1893—April 8, 1895 |
| J. A. B. Hurley | April, 1895—October 8, 1896 |
| H. B. Moore | October 29, 1896—January 29, 1920 |
| J. D. Moore, Jr. | February, 1920—October 8, 1924 |
| A. Froneberger | October 8, 1924— |

CHURCH CLERKS

| | |
|------------------------|-------------------------------------|
| W. H. Huffman | 1885—July 19, 1890 |
| J. D. Brumfield | July 19, 1890—November 20, 1892 |
| W. H. Huffman | November 20, 1892—December 27, 1896 |
| J. D. Moore | January, 1896—January 10, 1909 |
| R. A. Froneberger | January 10, 1909—January 10, 1915 |
| J. M. Shuford | January 10, 1915—December 10, 1919 |
| C. M. Moore | December 10, 1919—December 1, 1920 |
| E. B. Denny | December 1, 1920—November 9, 1927 |
| H. O. Eisenhour, Asst. | December 7, 1921—November 9, 1927 |
| O. W. Moran | November 9, 1927—January 23, 1929 |
| J. D. Moore, Jr. | May 8, 1929—February 19, 1930 |
| G. G. Willis | February 19, 1930—February 11, 1931 |
| Herrick Brumley | February 11, 1931—July 8, 1942 |
| A. G. Wallis | July 18, 1942—February 18, 1948 |
| Hoyt Butler | February 18, 1948—January 1, 1954 |
| C. E. Cheatham | January 1, 1954—January 1, 1955 |
| Herbert W. Price | January 1, 1955—January 1, 1957 |
| C. E. Cheatham | January 1, 1957—December 31, 1969 |
| Don Stacy | January 1, 1970— |

HISTORY OF THE WOMAN'S MISSIONARY UNION

February 9, 1902

Organized With 15 Charter Members

Presidents or Directors:

Mrs. W. F. Marshall

Mrs. Charlotte Blake

Mrs. Joe S. Wray

Mrs. W. C. Barrett

Mrs. H. B. Moore

Mrs. Ben Guion

Mrs. Ralph Stowe

Mrs. W. B. Hair, Sr.

Mrs. Clarence Eden

Mrs. A. Froneberger

Mrs. C. P. Nanney

Mrs. D. C. McSwain

Mrs. V. Ward Barr

Mrs. Forest Roberts, Sr.

Mrs. K. P. Mott

Miss Avarice Collins

Mrs. Charles W. Hawkins

Mrs. Ronald Gyles

Mrs. James Haynesworth

Mrs. J. C. Carothers, Sr.

Mrs. W. B. Hair, Jr.

Mrs. W. M. Farris

Mrs. Ernest Morgan

Mrs. Hugh Beveridge

Mrs. Herbert Price

Mrs. W. H. Rucker

Mrs. Fred West

Mrs. Ralph McKinney

Mrs. Buren Neill

SOME INTERESTING "FIRSTS" IN THE PRESENT BUILDING

First Baptism: Mr. J. C. Coyle, July 25, 1923

First Funeral: Kwong Kin Been, a Chinaman, October 28, 1923

First Wedding: Miss Pauline Shuford to Mr. Clifford L. Lowder,
November 25, 1924

First Vacation Bible School: Summer of 1925

JUNIOR ORGANIZATIONS

Sunbeams — 1904, Mrs. W. H. Reddish

Young Woman's Auxiliary — 1906, Mrs. W. H. Reddish

Girl's Auxiliary — 1923, Mrs. J. F. Swann

Royal Ambassadors — 1935, Mrs. Ben Guion

FIRST BAPTIST CHURCH

GASTONIA, N. C.

AUGUST 12, 1923



This is a happy day for the members of this church. We are glad to have our friends and neighbors to worship with us.
Make yourself at home in this, the Father's house,
and worship Him in Spirit and Truth.

Visitors will always find a cordial welcome at this church. The pastor will be pleased to meet them after services.

FIRST BAPTIST CHURCH

GASTONIA, N. C.

SUNDAY, AUGUST 12, 1923

MORNING WORSHIP

11:00 o'clock

Thanhauser Overture (Pilgrim's Chorus, Evening Song, Grand March) . . .
C. Asbury Gridley

Processional

Doxology

Invocation.

Anthem—"I'm a Pilgrim" Lorenza

Reading of Scripture

Prayer.

Solo Mrs. H. B. Moore

Offertory.

Anthem—Jubilate Deo.

Prayer.

Hymn No. 137.

Sermon Dr. John E. White

Hymn No. 436.

Benediction.

Organ Postlude—Triumphant March from "Aida."

Dont' forget to attend the Wednesday evening prayer service.

Please write the name of any Baptists who have recently moved to the city in the space below, tear off and drop in the collection plate:

Name

Street, No.

EVENING WORSHIP

Sunday, August 12, 1923, 8 O'clock

Prelude—Overture to "Zampa" C. Asbury Gridley

Processional.

Hymn No. 34.

Prayer.

Anthem—"Seek Ye the Lord."

Scripture Reading.

Solo Mrs. D. H. Williams

Prayer.

Hymn No. 17.

Sermon Dr. John E. White

Hymn No. 25.

Benediction.

Organ Postlude Selected

ANNOUNCEMENTS

SUNDAY—B. Y. P. U.'s, Sections A and B, Intermediates and Juniors meet at 7:00 P. M.

Sunbeams meet at 4 p. m.

TUESDAY—Teachers meeting at 8 p. m.

WEDNESDAY—Prayermeeting at 8 p. m.

FRIDAY—Choir practice at 8 p. m.

Men's Convention Bible Class meets at 9:45 A. M.

N B.—When you move to a new location, sign your name, give new address tear off and drop in collection plate.

Name

Street and No.

HISTORICAL SKETCH

The First Baptist Church in Gastonia was organized in 1876. Rev. P. R. Elam, Missionary from the Kings Mountain Association was its first pastor. There were twenty-nine charter members. Rev. D. W. Thomasson, Rev. A. K. Durham and Rev. P. R. Elam constituted the presbytery which organized the church. They worshipped for a while in a small one room house that had been used for a restaurant; run by a colored woman, near the Modena Cotton Mills.

Through the courtesy of Mr. J. E. Page, Railroad Agent, they soon moved into the Railroad Station. In March 1876 the Sunday School moved west to a house 20x40 feet, about one-third of a mile from the station. In 1882 the church moved its place of worship to the Academy on Oakland Street, near Mr. O. F. Mason's residence. By 1884 the church had become inactive and disorganized. In 1885, through the activities of Capt. J. D. Moore, the church was re-organized with nineteen of the original members and eight others.

A lot on the corner of Long and Marietta Streets was given by Rev. Sylvanus Head and wife and a house built on it. In 1900 the church was rebuilt at a cost of about \$7,000.00. In 1907 and 1908 the property on Franklin Avenue and South Street was purchased at \$7,000.00. Mrs. Martha J. Moore built the parsonage, which cost her \$6,000.00. The present church building on the corner of Franklin Avenue and South Street was begun October 17th, 1921.

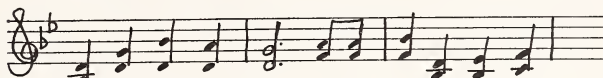
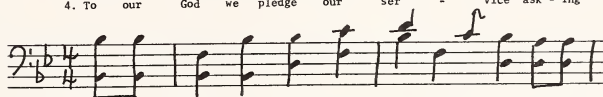
The names of the pastors of the church, so far as we have been able to learn, are: P. R. Elam, G. M. Webb, D. W. Thomasson, A. P. Pugh, J. H. Booth, A. L. Stough, J. A. White, F. C. Hickson, E. F. Jones, R. W. Saunders (supply pastor two months), C. H. Durham, W. F. Watson, W. H. Reddish, W. C. Barrett.

To God We Lift Our Voices

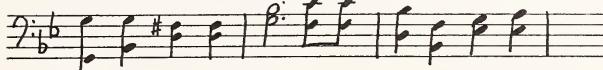
BEECHWOOD 8.7.8.7.D



1. To our God we lift our voi - ces, Thank-ing
 2. Praise the Lord for years of mem - 'ry of those
 3. Ed - u - cate them in the scrip - tures. Ground them
 4. To our God we pledge our ser - vice ask - ing



Him for bless-ings past. Prais-ing Him for all His
 saints who gave their best. That the church might stand a
 firm up - on God's word; That they may be through-ly
 Him for fu - ture good. Build-ing on the work of



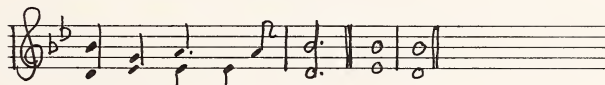
mer - cies In this land so rich and vast. In life's
 bea - con Ligh-ting lost ones in life's quest. May the
 fur - nished With sure skill to wield God's Sword. Help them
 o - thers; Join-ing hearts in bro - ther - hood. May the



jour - ney we are debt - ors To the brave who pushed a -
 church re - gain its vig - or By the power of God's great
 mi - ni - ster in Christ's name, To all peo - ples needs a -
 church re - new its pur - pose, Shap-ing lives for shar-ing.



head. We are heirs of their de - vo - tion. We now
 might. De - di - cate its sons and daugh - ters To the
 lert. Show-ing love and true com - pas - sion In the
 love; Giv - ing each a last - ing vis - ion Of real



walk where they have led.
 cause of love and right.
 midst of pain and hurt.
 life from God a - bove. A-men.

